

Ferry tourism business up

By CATHY BROWN
THE JUNEAU EMPIRE

It was a full house, or at least closer to it, at some Juneau motels last year.

Business was up about 8 percent last year at the Super 8 Motel in Juneau, said Joyce Wiltshire, the resident manager. The Breakwater Inn and the Auke Bay RV Park also reported busier seasons last year.

The change those businesses saw may be partly due to an increase last year in the number of visitors who came to Alaska by highway and ferry.

A report prepared for the state Division of Tourism shows the statewide number of visitors arriving by ferry last year rose 14 percent and the number arriving by highway was up 17 percent.

That's good news, said Ginny Fay, acting director of the Division of Tourism.

"Independent travelers tend to spend more money and stay longer," she said. "They provide a lot of direct benefits to local, small businesses along the highway."

Cruise ship traffic was also up last year, but only by about 3 percent. That is not a large increase compared to recent years. Since 1989, cruise ship travel has increased by an average of 11 percent a year.

The Division of Tourism attributed the increase in highway and ferry travel to several factors: Gold Rush

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Travelers...

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Centennial promotions last year by Alaska and the Yukon, improved ferry service with the Malaspina shuttle in Lynn Canal and the new Kennicott ferry, and a state promotional program aimed specifically at independent travelers.

The number of highway and ferry travelers had been declining, which prompted the state to focus on promoting independent travel for the past three or four years, Fay said.

John Mazor, president of the Juneau Convention and Visitors Bureau, said in conversations with other convention and visitors bureaus in Southeast, none mentioned a large increase in independent travelers last year.

It may be that independent travelers on the ferry visited a community, but did not spend the night, Fay said. If so, their visits wouldn't have shown up in increased bed

taxes, which is one indicator of the number of independent travelers.

At the Breakwater Inn, General Manager Michael Allen said it's hard to compare last year to previous years because the motel housed some members of a production crew working on the movie "Limbo."

Even taking that into considera-

tion, however, he said, business was up.

"Our independent travel business has been slowly increasing every year," he said.

Overall, the number of visitors to Alaska last year increased by 1.3 percent. Slowdowns in visitors arriving by air kept the overall rate from rising higher.

The Division of Tourism report

attributed a 4.7 percent decline in international air traffic to troubles in the Asian economy.

Although the percentage increase in highway and ferry travelers was greater than the percentage increases in other areas, the actual number is still lower than those using other forms of transportation.

Ferry steward's job runs the gamut from saving lives to planning weddings

By MARY LOU GERBI
FOR THE JUNEAU EMPIRE

Virgil Ward's job title is chief steward on the ferry Kennicott, but his duties involve far more than keeping rooms clean and food hot.

Once, he helped a young couple whose baby's lips were turning blue on a run to Haines.

"They didn't know what to do," said Ward, a 30-year veteran of the Alaska Marine Highway System.

With help from a nurse on board, he took charge.

"I got them in the sick room and administered oxygen," he said. When medics checked the baby in Haines, she was fine, drinking from her bottle.

Ward's job is on the water, but unlike the ferry captain or engineers, his duties — cleaning, food preparation and laundry — resemble those in the service industry.

"I'm like a hotel manager," said

Ward, who oversees a crew of about 16.

Ward and other employees aboard the Alaska Marine Highway System help passengers with problems from illness to planning a wedding or New Year's party at sea.

A lifelong Juneau resident, Ward spent time on fish tenders in Hawk Inlet and drove a cab until his mother hounded him to apply for a job on one of Alaska's ferries. It took a year before he was called.

Decked out in his new uniform, Ward began his ferry career at age 22 aboard the Wickersham, then the largest and fastest vessel in the ferry system.

Originally built for gambling, the Wickersham had rooms designed for slot machines, roulette and card games.

"It was finished, trimmed out with no pipes or wiring showing,"

“
I'm like a hotel manager.”

— Virgil Ward, chief steward on the Kennicott

he said. "It had Herb Bonnet's murals painted on the bulkheads, real silver serving trays, crystal — it was so special, a really unique Norwegian-built ship sold to the Swedish," refitted for Alaska ferry service in 1968.

Ward worked as a waiter and later worked on the Columbia, Taku, Malaspina and Le Conte before moving to the Kennicott, the ferry system's newest vessel.

When the Kennicott recently

ferried five high school basketball teams, the whole staff worked to find places for all the kids to sleep.

Sometimes passengers are less than pleasant, especially when there are domestic fights, which often result from heavy drinking before a couple gets on board.

Once, as the vessel was pulling into Kake, a 28-year-old man suffered a massive heart attack. Ward and fellow employee Jim Beedle spent almost half an hour giving the man cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

"We started CPR until a police officer/medic in Kake took over and pronounced him dead," Ward said.

The situations the purser and chief steward encounter are incredibly varied. Ward has served governors and legislators at inaugural balls, helped rescue sinking



BRIAN WALLACE / THE JUNEAU EMPIRE

He's the boss: Virgil Ward, chief steward on the Alaska state ferry Kennicott, relaxes on board.

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Steward...

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boats and lost hunters, and survived a charter with three British Columbia rock bands.

His most memorable job was helping Santa deliver presents.

"I was an elf," he said.

Ward's day begins at 6 a.m. with an inspection of restrooms, showers, lounges, the galley and stairwells. He checks the day's menu, goes over supply orders, and makes sure there are no out-of-date foods. He also has laundry, garbage and other housekeeping duties. Changing linens and cleaning 50 rooms is especially tough in Skagway, the end of the line for north-bound passengers, where everybody has to hustle to prepare for southbound passengers.

Coast Guard regulations also require safety training and drills so

the staff knows where to find flotation devices, fire pulls, and fire extinguishers; where to direct passengers in case of emergencies; and how to dispose of hazardous materials, including cleaning chemicals.

Then there's the paperwork. Everything must be documented, recorded, noted, and passed on to the next crew.

"Keeping the crew happy is of primary importance," Ward said. "You have to keep everything flowing between departments."

Ward said ferry work, with its 12-hour days and sometimes unpredictable working conditions, can be challenging.

But his week-on, week-off schedule gives him more quality time with his family.

"It's a great job," he said. "I've worked with some really good people, I've been able to travel and meet all kinds of different and fascinating people."

ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

- 50th ANNIVERSARY -

Ferry tale

A favorite Petersburg "ferry tale" is still told 25 years after the event:

The Malaspina was making her first call at Petersburg and the town turned out to welcome her. Among the greeters was one of the town's characters, a member of what was called the Blueberry Hill gang which lived out on Hammer Slough. This gent staggered to the dock, supported himself against a pole, squinted at the ferry through bloodshot eyes and said, "The trouble with the ferry system is that it'll bring the riff raff in."

Getting ready

The Matanuska, the Tustumena and the Columbia are shown in early spring at Northwest Marine Iron Works in Portland. The three ships were there for their annual checkups and maintenance.

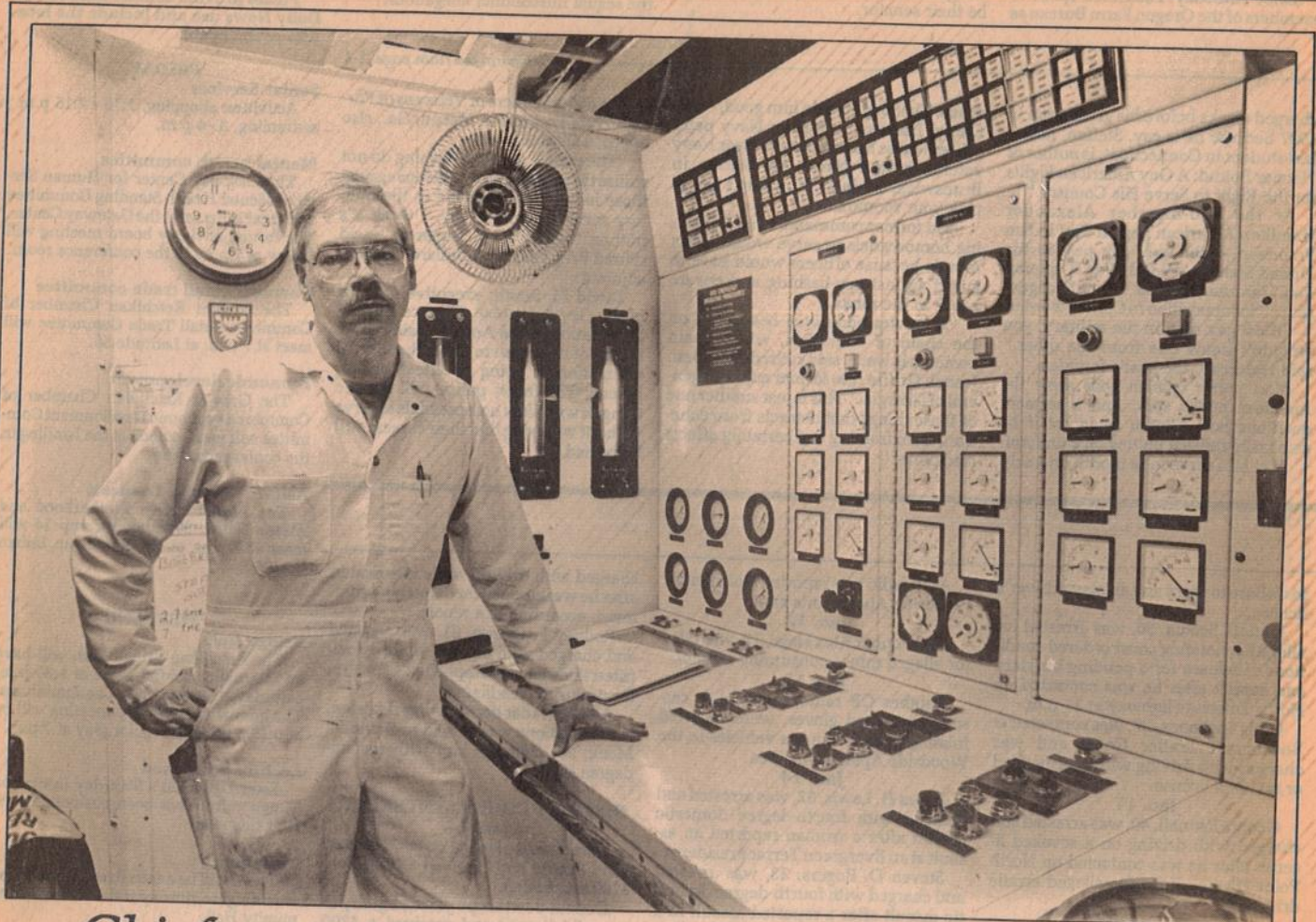


ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

- 50th ANNIVERSARY -

Vol. 58 No. 024, (UPD 293-940), 18 pages

Ketchikan, Alaska, Friday, January 29, 1993



Chief engineer

John Hunnewell, chief engineer of the Matanuska, poses in the engineer's operation station Thursday evening in the engine room of the Alaska Marine Highway System ferry. The ship will be conducting sea trials for the next few days to check its new steering system. The vessel is expected to be back on line Wednesday for the Bellingham, Wash., run.

Staff photo by Hall Anderson

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ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

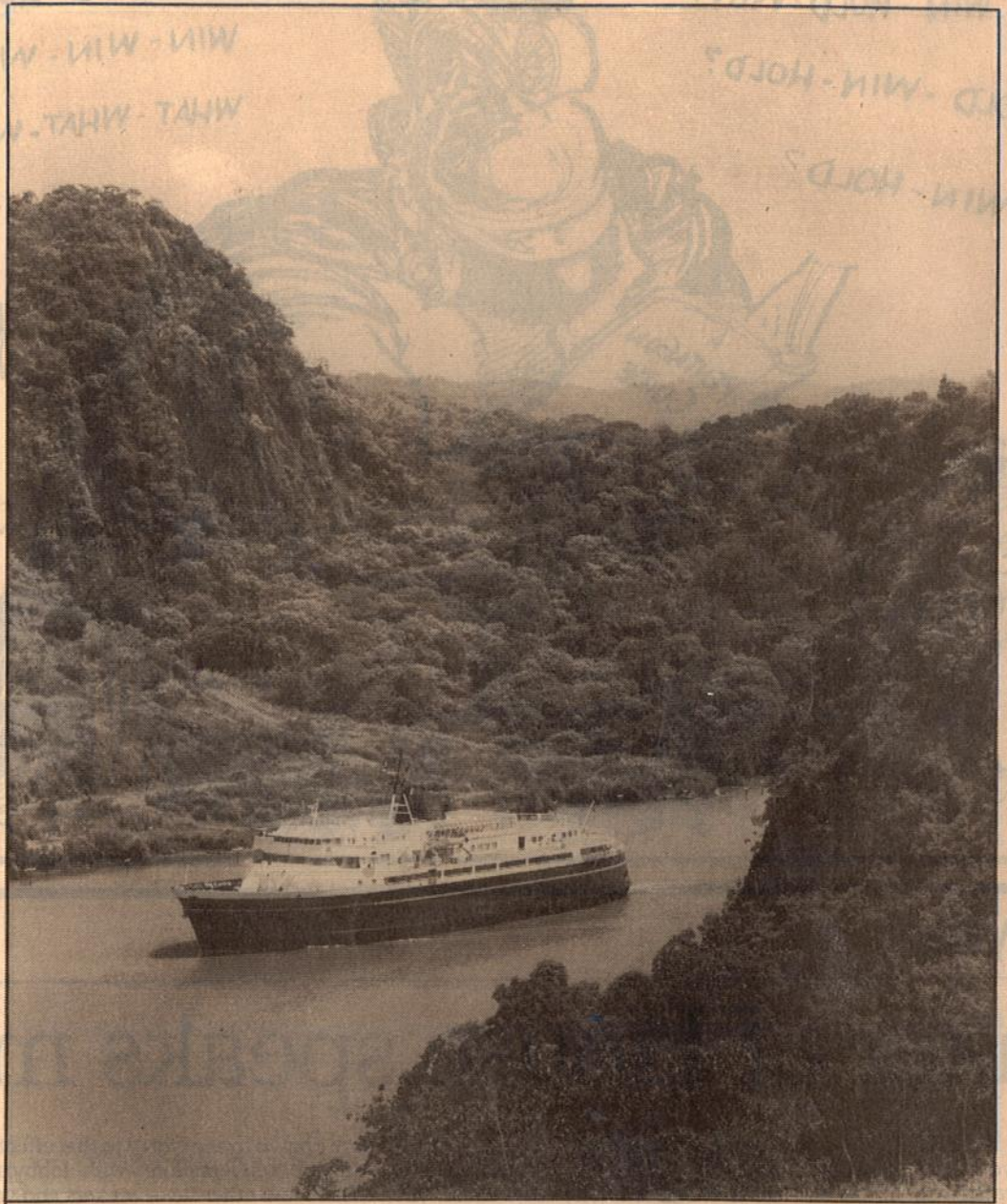
- 50th ANNIVERSARY -

1993

An Alaskan in Panama

The Alaska Marine Highway System ferry Taku heads West through the Panama Canal on June 17. The ship had been in Alabama for an engine refit. Taku is scheduled to resume service on the Bellingham-Skagway run on June 29.

Photo Courtesy
Alaska Marine
Highway System



ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

- 50th ANNIVERSARY -



Dock work

The state ferry Malaspina went up on the dry dock recently for annual maintenance. The ferry is the first vessel to be worked on at Ketchikan Shipyard since the facility's reopening.

4/15/94

Statt photo by Hall Anderson

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Captain Bill Hopkins Collection

Rescue at sea *Matanuska* crew saves two

By TIM NEFF

Daily News Staff Writer

The state ferry Matanuska rescued two people adrift in a crippled boat Saturday evening near the south end of Milbanke Sound, according to Alaska Marine Highway System officials.

Herman White, of Bella Bella, British Columbia, and Angeline Wilson, of Waglisla, British Columbia, drifted for three hours after their outboard motor lost power, said George Reifenstein, operations manager for the marine highway.

Reifenstein was traveling aboard the Matanuska during the rescue.

White and Wilson, both in their mid-20s, received precautionary treatment for hypothermia after they were transferred from the Matanuska to a rescue boat sent by the Canadian Coast Guard.

Able Seaman Michael Beech, of Ketchikan, was on watch aboard the Matanuska at about 5:30 p.m. when he spotted something that looked like a flare, said Reifenstein.

Moving closer and shining a spotlight in the area, crewmembers noticed the 19-foot fiberglass skiff.

"It was a dark night out there," Reifenstein said. "They were very, very lucky."

See 'Rescue,' page A-2

Rescue

Continued from page A-1

White and Wilson had removed pieces of clothing, doused them with gasoline and lit them on fire to signal passing ships, said Reifenstein.

Crewmembers tossed a line to the skiff from the ferry's car deck. A rescue ladder was lowered, and the couple was brought aboard.

Strong winds and choppy water overturned the skiff as Wilson stepped onto

the rescue ladder, said Reifenstein.

The Canadian Coast Guard sent a boat from the Boat Bluff lighthouse to pick up the couple. They were lowered to the vessel in one of the Matanuska's lifeboats.

White and Wilson were traveling from Bella Bella to Klemtu when the skiff's outboard motor failed. The cause of the failure is unknown, said Reifenstein.

The Matanuska, enroute from Bellingham to Ketchikan, spotted the skiff about 8 to 10 miles offshore in Milbanke Sound, said Reifenstein.

They were not carrying lifejackets or oars, he said.

The ferry resumed its trip at about 7:15 p.m.

The captain of the Matanuska on the trip was William Hopkins of Ketchikan.

Point of view

Marine highway editorial misguided

By William M. Hopkins

I read the editorial in last Sunday's newspaper which stated that the Alaska Marine Highway's LeConte/Aurora vessels are the most costly and should get out of the way of the proposed P.O.W. Island ferry system. I found this short editorial to be ill informed.

Traffic records kept on this vessel are as follows:

1991: 66,196 passengers, 19,199 motor vehicles and 2,627 cargo vans.

1992: 83,060 passengers, 23,363 motor vehicles and 3,208 cargo vans.

1993: 64,964 passengers, 19,187 motor vehicles, 2,729 cargo vans.

The M/V Aurora has served Ketchikan, Metlakatla, Hyder and Hollis faithfully and well for many years, and we deserve better treatment in your newspaper.

1994: 43,236 passengers, 12,211 motor vehicles, 991 cargo vans.

Both 1991 and 1993 were average years for the M/V Aurora while serving mostly Hollis and Metlakatla. You must also remember that we spend a portion of our year on the winter panhandle run serving the entire panhandle when the M/V LeConte is in shipyard. It should be noted that shipyard is an annual requirement by the U.S. Coast Guard for passenger vessels.

1992 was an excellent year. This reflects the 50-year anniversary of the construction of the Alaska Highway, which brought a lot of tourists into our economy. The Aurora made money, contrary to the view of your editorial.

1994 was a watershed year. We suffered a large decrease in traffic for several reasons. In 1994 the Aurora had a lengthy shipyard period lasting for four months to come into compliance with federal handicap access laws. An elevator from the cardeck to the forward lounge was installed, the public restrooms were redesigned for wheel chairs, new gravity davits and lifeboats and a new life raft system were also installed, in addition to the usual annual maintenance. The ship's bar was closed down at the request of P.O.W., a loss of revenue.

The new Super Valu shopping complex opened up in Klawock. Our traditional customers now have less need to travel to Ketchikan for shopping. And finally, a former A.M.H.S. director Greg Dronkert, gave our cargo can business away to a private carrier. Mr. Dronkert also raised the fares to make up for the lost revenue, further impeding traffic. All of this combined has translated into a business loss for the M/V Aurora. Today, no matter what time of day, we have empty cardeck space. Empty cardeck space was once a rare occasion for Hollis sailings.

Your editorial also totally ignores the fact that most of the jobs on the Aurora are Ketchikan jobs. There are 24 crew members to operate the Aurora, a manning level required by the U.S. Coast Guard. There are two separate crews to

To me, replacing the Aurora, a \$35 million ship, with a \$9 million vessel is not progress, especially for wintertime crossings of Clarence Strait.

run the ship for a total of 48 jobs. There are also relief personnel who relieve crew members when ill or on vacation. In total, you are looking at around 55 jobs associated with the Aurora. 80 percent of these probably come from Ketchikan, 10 percent from other Alaskan communities, including Metlakatla, P.O.W., and Hyder, and the last 10 percent, heaven forbid, from Seattle.

To me, replacing the Aurora, a \$35 million ship, with a \$9 million vessel is not progress, especially for wintertime crossings of Clarence Strait. A new P.O.W. ferry is not going to change the fact that P.O.W. is 36.7 nautical miles from Ketchikan. It will be shorter of course, if the new vessel lands north of town at Knudsen Cove. But, the passenger must still invest more time and money in transportation into town either by cab or bus. Also the new ferry is proposed to stop at Kasaan on the way. Another stop adds to the time of transit, regardless of what the "experts" say. Furthermore, if one is prone to sea sickness on the Aurora during rough crossings, think of the fun it will be on a smaller vessel.

You also implied that the Aurora has done a poor job. What an insult. The

Aurora has operated well, with very few break downs, around the clock, in all weathers, over the years, linking Hyder, Metlakatla, and Hollis/P.O.W. to Ketchikan, regardless of what you say. We have brought business to Ketchikan and have been a benefit to the local economy, not a costly burden.

Those of us who are from Ketchikan and work on the Aurora are committed to Ketchikan. We are raising our families here; our kids go to school here; we pay our taxes here; we have our mortgages here; we spend our money here; we live here. The Aurora buys its fuel in Ketchikan; it buys its food in Ketchikan; it goes to shipyard in Ketchikan.

I enjoy reading your newspaper, but hopefully the next time you feel the need to spout off without knowing what you are fully talking about you will be more considerate. I am not a spokesman for the Alaska Marine Highway System. I do believe, however, that your editorial does need to be challenged. The M/V Aurora has served Ketchikan, Metlakatla, Hyder and Hollis faithfully and well for many years, and we deserve better treatment in your newspaper.

(William M. Hopkins is a captain on the M/V Aurora, B-crew.)

ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

- 50th ANNIVERSARY -

Ketchikan, Alaska, Saturday-Sunday, August 5-6, 1995



Vehicles bound for Prince of Wales Island board the state ferry Aurora berthed in Ketchikan on Friday afternoon. The Aurora is one of the main transportation links to the island.

Photo by Seanna O'Sullivan

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Captain Bill Hopkins Collection

75 CENTS

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1997

KETCHIKAN, ALASKA

Rupert welcomes Alaska back

Ferry's first run back to B.C. goes smoothly

By TOM MILLER

Daily News Staff Writer

The Alaska Marine Highway System renewed service to Prince Rupert on Thursday, without incident, for the first time since 300 Canadian fishermen blockaded the ferry Malaspina for three days in July.

The Aurora's arrival was a happy occasion in Prince Rupert where many businesses depend on tourism and other trade with Southeast Alaska, which in turn depends partly on the state's ferry system.

The mayors of Ketchikan and Prince Rupert gave speeches, as did other elected officials from Ketchikan and Prince Rupert and Capt. Bob Doll, the head of the state ferry system. All the speeches marked the day and extolled the importance of transportation and communication between Southeast and British Columbia. The speakers exchanged presents and plaques.

Serious implications

Others spoke unofficially, but convincingly, about the serious implications of the four-month disruption of transportation and commerce between the state and the province and between the sister cities of Ketchikan and Prince Rupert.

"I'm holding on by my fingernails but my arms are getting tired," said Lee Brodie, owner of the Shell gas station near the Prince Rupert ferry terminal.

Brodie said he sells fuel and groceries and rents parking spaces to travelers. His business dropped by \$100,000 a month — more than \$3,000 a day — when Alaska began avoiding Prince Rupert after the blockade.

Wayne Campbell, caretaker of the city-owned Park Avenue Campground near Brodie's gas station, pointed to a usually full, but nearly empty lot. It had been that empty or only slightly fuller since July, he said.

Moe Hays, the golf pro at the Prince Rupert Centennial Golf Course, said the course sorely missed its normal business of catering to tourists traveling through to Alaska. The course also missed business from the many Ketchikan and other Southeastern residents it usually serves, he said.

Never in doubt

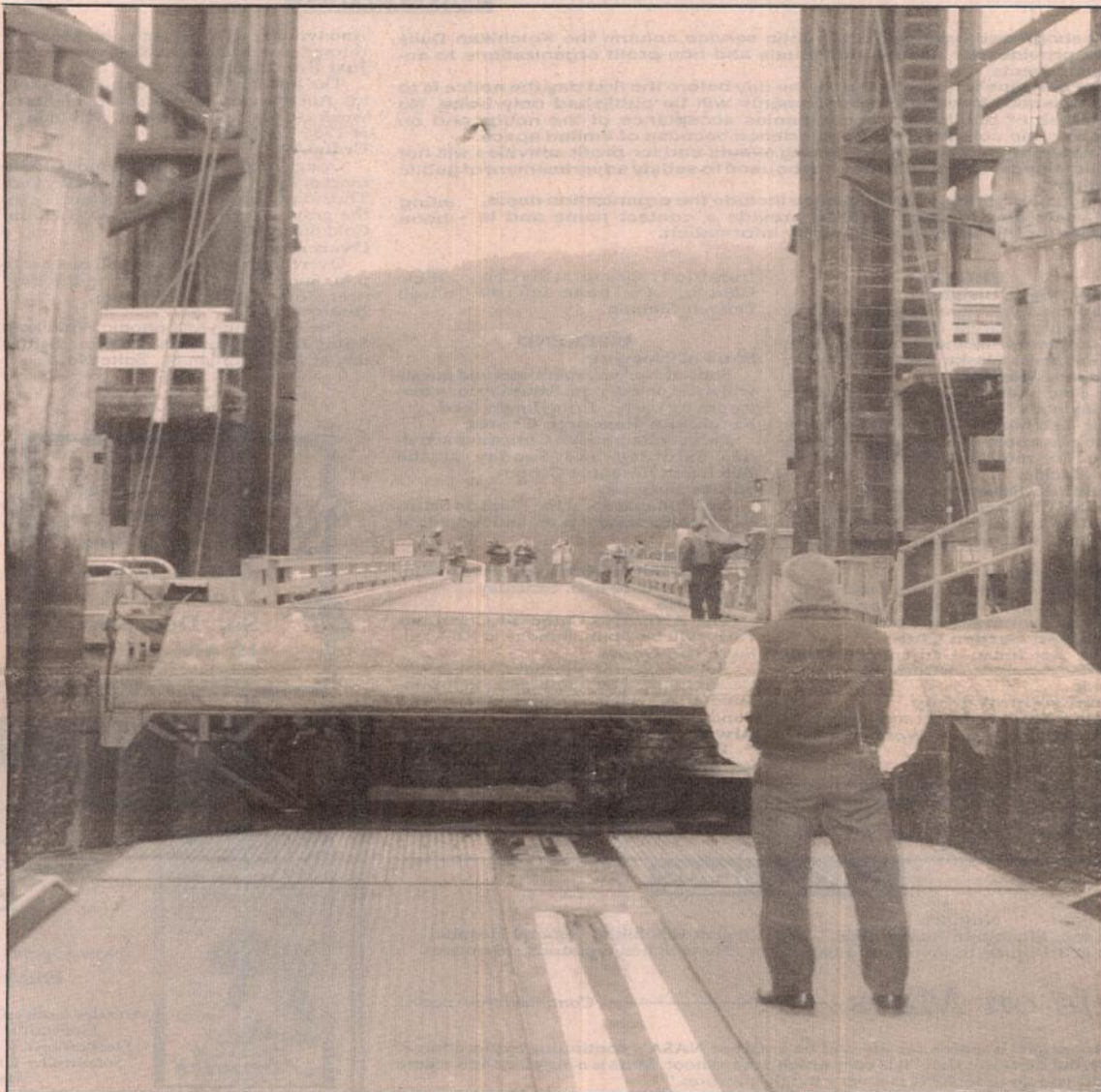
However, the eventual resumption of service was never in doubt to Mayors Bob Weinstein, of Ketchikan, and Jack Mussallem of Prince Rupert.

"It's been quite a summer here in Prince Rupert," Mussallem said.

When the ferry interruption began in July, Mussallem received calls immediately from the leaders of Southeast Alaskan communities assuring him that they would work to restore service, he said.

The 235-foot ferry arrived carrying 93 passengers and 32 vehicles from Ketchikan. About 20 of the people were traveling as a delegation from Ketchikan.

Overcast skies prevented viewing of the planets, said to be lined up in a neat row overhead, but that didn't dampen the mood of about a third of the group who played rummy and cribbage till all hours in the ship's



Members of the Canadian media await the state ferry Aurora's arrival Thursday morning as the ship's Chief Mate Greg Styrk, foreground, supervises the positioning of the ferry terminal's ramp.

Staff photos by Tom Miller

cafeteria.

Others, including Alaska State Trooper Lt. Doug Norris, curled up on the deck or in reclining chairs and slept.

At 9 a.m., Prince Rupert time, two Canadian Coast Guard boats met the ferry and escorted it into port. On the bridge, Capt. Bill Hopkins was receiving welcome calls by radio from a British Columbia ferry that was docked in the harbor. Other boats also were welcoming the ferry, including the Port of Prince Rupert, which escorted the ship and carried Canadian media.

See 'Ferry returns,' page 3

Some Prince Rupert charter fishermen came out to welcome the Aurora and its passengers back to British Columbia.



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Captain Bill Hopkins Collection

Ferry returns

Continued from page 1

As the Aurora backed in to the Alaska ferry terminal at 9:30 a.m., cheers could be heard from the nearby hillside. The Ketchikan delegation waved back from the bow of the ferry. More Canadian media at the top of the ramp began taking pictures when Chief Mate Greg Styck lowered the ferry's vehicle ramp.

Mayor Mussallem, along with Prince Rupert City Council members and Mayor Ed Wampler of the nearby District of Port Edward, also waited at the top of the ramp.

Farther up the road, fisherman Rusty Doane and two other men stood before a large sign reading, "Canadian Fish for Canadian Fishermen — Stop the piracy." Doane and Mussallem argued briefly when Doane accused the mayor of "kissing Alaska's (expletive deleted)."

When the Alaskans walked up the ramp, a throng of television cameras, radio microphones and other reporters gathered around Ketchikan Mayor Bob Weinstein.

He told them that he was looking forward to "renewing a good relationship with Canada, British Columbia and Prince Rupert."

He acknowledged that U.S.-Canadian fishing controversies continue but cited recent encouraging news reports regarding progress for success in negotiations before the next fishing season.

Other people disembarking the ferry were traveling to Prince Rupert for the usual reasons — shopping, vacationing or doing business.

Annette and Louie Thompson of Kasaan took the ferry Thursday partly just to witness the big day, but also to shop in Prince Rupert for three hours before the ferry returned to Ketchikan. Annette Thompson said they were happy the service was reinstated.

About 70 people attended a short ceremony in the Alaska terminal building.

"It's been a very hard summer for us with the loss of this ferry service," said Mussallem.

Not only Prince Rupert, but also Port Edward, Terrace, the Hazeltons, Smithers, Houston and Prince George suffered economically, he said.

Many aboriginal people who have families across both borders were affected, said Mussallem.

"It's very important to realize that Prince Rupert, like the communities in Southeast Alaska, is an island community; that ferry service means a lot to us ... that when you're on an island, transportation is so very, very important to your way of life and to the cost of living."

The mayor thanked the leaders of Southeast towns "for working with us and lobbying their government in the same way that we have lobbied our government for the return of this service."

Later at a brunch sponsored by the City of Prince Rupert at the Crest Hotel, Mussallem thanked the Alaska ferry system for helping to reinstate the service.

"They never forgot about Prince

Rupert ... They were always interested in working with us and with their government to see that the service could be reinstated."

The next job is to get the American and Canadian governments to work just as well together to resolve the fisheries issues, he said.

Mussallem presented Doll with a hand carved plaque of an eagle to symbolize things the international, coastal communities have in common, he said.

Doll accepted the plaque and said the ferry system embarks and disembarks about 24,000 people and 7,300 vehicles in Canada every year.

"That kind of traffic between our two areas is only an indication of the much greater relationship which I am happy to be here to reinstate," Doll said.

He thanked Mussallem and Alaska Gov. Tony Knowles for reinstating the ferry service. Doll praised the Marine Highway employees.

"It is they who had to face the public during the difficult times when the uncertainties imposed by the events of last July produced a lot of antagonism and could have made a lot of unhappy customers," he said.

The employees made it possible to attract those customers back to the system, he said.

Ketchikan Mayor Weinstein thanked everyone for the warm welcome and said he intended to continue fostering the warm, sister-city relationship between the two communities.

"The Alaska Marine Highway System is Ketchikan's highway and Southeast Alaska's highway," he said.

It is an important part of the region's basic transportation infrastructure, he said.

Weinstein was in humorous form, both at the terminal and at the brunch. He received a large laugh when Mussallem presented him with a wrapped present in a box. Weinstein took the box and immediately placed his ear against it.

"Beware Canadians bearing gifts," he said to laughter from the dignitaries in the hotel ballroom.

The gift, however, was not unpleasant. It consisted of a long, raindrop-shaped piece of glass and a short inscription:

"A Prince Rupert raindrop, or is it a tear? Maybe an Angel let it fall here. Take one home to keep or give away. Ten less will fall another day."

The Aurora departed Prince Rupert at noon — more quietly than it had arrived — with nary another boat in sight.

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Captain Bill Hopkins Collection



Keep Malaspina working

Posted: Friday, January 16, 1998

At some point in the next several weeks, the Legislature will take up issues that concern ferry riders throughout Alaska. Southeast residents have a keen interest in all matters relating to the Alaska Marine Highway - it's how we get our groceries, how we visit our neighbors and how we move our cars to the paved road systems elsewhere. We'll be paying attention.

When the marine highway discussions begin in earnest, we hope legislators will take a constructive approach, a problem-solving approach. There need be no race to beat up the ferry system and there's little to be gained by tearing Southeast residents apart over existing ferry schedules. With so many communities to serve and every community desiring an ideal sailing schedule, compromises and limitations will always characterize a ferry system.

Certainly Rep. Bill Hudson is on the right track when he says that legislators should not meddle in matters that the communities can work out for themselves. Indeed, communities and state transportation planners are tackling the improvement of their transportation systems, with the extension of the Metlakatla road as a prime example of how a combination of roads and ferries can improve the overall transportation picture. Prince of Wales Island communities are also solving problems for themselves, by trying to forge a small ferry system to serve communities in the southern end of Southeast Alaska. And Sitka is talking with state transportation planners about a road from Sitka to Rodman Bay or Baranof Warm Springs, which would shorten the time needed by ferries now taking the Peril Strait route.

None of these plans is the entire solution to fixing what ails the Alaska Marine Highway System. Aging ships and huge labor costs make the ferry service an easy target for criticism, both fair and unfair.

One part of the overall solution is the Malaspina day boat plan for northern Lynn Canal. When the new Kennicott comes on line, the communities of Juneau, Haines and Skagway would benefit by having the Malaspina kept in service and made use of on the busiest route of the state. Yes, it's an expansion of service in a time of budget constraints. But the run between Juneau and its neighbors to the north is a bargain, since riders nearly pay for the entire operating costs of the vessel. A more regular ferry would bring additional commerce to the region in all seasons, boosting the economy and bringing in tax revenues. At the same time, other ferries will be able to call on Southeast towns on a more frequent schedule, something that would be welcomed by all.

The ferry system, designed before statehood, needs to change to keep up with the times. Change may include a combination of road and ferry solutions that helps address the costs of running a marine highway.

But for now, we have no doubt that the single most effective action legislators can take to improve transportation in all of Southeast is to fund the Malaspina conversion.



Presto, change-o: Boat gets double duty

Posted: Sunday, January 18, 1998

MOSS POINT, Miss. - Alaska is about to receive what's akin to a 380-foot Transformer toy.

Only this is no toy.

One day it's a state ferry that can traverse ocean waters and haul up to 750 people. But within 24 hours, it can metamorphose into the command center for emergency teams responding to an oil spill, similar to the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill, or another disaster.

The new Kennicott ferry includes a helicopter landing pad, decontamination showers, more than 150 telephones and a floating dock that's stored below deck.

"It's total overkill for a ferry," said project manager Gerry Egan at the Moss Point, Miss., shipyard where the vessel is being built.

But this boat is what the state decided it needed to effectively clean up a major oil spill. According to state officials, they discovered what was required the hard way, while struggling in the early weeks after the 1989 spill to pull together a cleanup effort.

"It took a long time for people to get up to speed," said Gary Hayden, director of construction, maintenance and operations for the Southeast Region of the state Transportation Department. "By the time they got up to speed, the oil was so dispersed, it was much harder to clean up."

Adding the oil-spill response system to the Kennicott served another critical purpose - it provided a way to fund the ferry. The emergency response system costs about \$15 million and is paid for by oil sales revenue and Exxon's reimbursement to the state for costs incurred in the 1989 spill, said Hayden, a former ferry system director.

But funding for the new ferry would have been virtually impossible to get without the emergency response system, because money was tight in the early 1990s, said Rep. Ramona Barnes, an Anchorage Republican who was on the House Finance Committee at the time.

"That was the year when we had revenue going downhill, before we had gotten a lot of money in the constitutional budget reserve," Barnes said. "We were in a bad way financially."

Although dubbed the "oil-sucking ferry" by some in the Legislature, the Kennicott will not mop up oil itself, but instead serve as the headquarters for those involved in the cleanup. The vessel carries a U-shaped marina, 40 feet long on each side, to tie up the boats that are actually cleaning up the oil.

The Kennicott's helicopter pad will allow people to be quickly brought to and from the ship, rather than landing on shore and sending them out by boat.

"You can lower people up and down with a sling, but when the governor comes, he would probably rather walk," Egan said.

The helicopter deck will also be used when the Kennicott is serving as a passenger ferry. Sen. Robin Taylor, a Wrangell Republican, believes every ferry should have a helicopter port, so passengers who need emergency health care can be airlifted out and taken to a hospital.

"I wouldn't tolerate a new vessel being built if it didn't have a helicopter pad on it," Taylor said.

ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

- 50th ANNIVERSARY -



Among problems faced after the Exxon Valdez spill was communication between those leading remediation efforts and the cleanup boats, often too far away to be in radio contact.

To prevent similar dilemmas in the future, the state has installed a communications system on the Kennicott that includes eight satellite channels, \$35,000 in radios and more than 150 telephones, Egan said.

That means, unlike other state ferries, the Kennicott will have telephones in the staterooms, as well as four public telephone booths.

``It provides a nice bennie for passengers," Egan said.

In an emergency, the seats and tables in the main viewing lounge would be whisked away and replaced with 20 desks that would become the hub of the command center. The theater would be converted into a briefing room for reporters.

Alaska's other state ferries frequently head into port to load and unload passengers, so they aren't designed to hold large quantities of supplies, Egan said.

That was a problem after the Exxon Valdez, when cleanup efforts were sometimes interrupted to restock supplies.

``You spent a lot of time running back and forth," Hayden said.

The Kennicott, however, has room to carry enough supplies it can go out to sea with 200 people on board for 20 days without any outside support, according to Egan. The vessel also has the ability to make as much as 5,000 gallons of drinkable water a day out of sea water.

The ship's emergency response capabilities eat up storage room on the boat, but do not limit the number of passengers, which is instead determined by the vessel's life-saving features, Egan said.

Sen. Taylor said the chance of another oil spill like the Exxon Valdez seems unlikely, considering the precautions that have been put in place. But he said perhaps the Kennicott would be used to cope with smaller spills in Southeast, where tankers carry several million gallons of refined oil.

``It makes me more comfortable knowing we've got it," Taylor said. ``You need to have a fire truck available in case there's a fire, and pray you never have to use one."



Ferry windfall goes a long ways

Posted: Friday, March 13, 1998

We never doubted our congressional delegation's ability to come through with federal transportation money for Alaska. But the amount that came Alaska's way in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act astounded us. Sen. Ted Stevens and Sen. Frank Murkowski managed to boost Alaska's share of federal transportation spending through the year 2003 by 47 percent.

The ISTEA bill is one of the biggest spending bills to be passed in years. A window of opportunity arose for Congress because money from the federal gas tax that has been traditionally used to lower the national deficit is - in this year of federal budget surpluses - being used entirely for transportation.

More than \$214 billion dollars will be spent on mass transit and highway projects across the country during the next six years. Alaska will get \$300 million a year for the next six years.

The best news of all for Southeast Alaska is that \$142 million is being made available for our Alaska Marine Highway - the only certified ferry interstate in the nation - to replace the three oldest ships in the fleet, the Malaspina, Matanuska and Taku. All are older than 35 years. The money can also be used for terminals and approaches.

It happened with two amendments: One by Sen. Stevens earmarked \$70 million in mass transit money for the construction of ferries in Alaska. It was the current highway bill, which expires in May, that paid for the lion's share of the construction of the Kennicott, which will be in service this summer. Another, by Sen. Frank Murkowski, appropriates \$20 million a year nationwide for ferries - money that Alaska will have to compete for through the appropriations process.

The ISTEA spending package means that by the year 2005, we could have three new ferries. Of course, the bill must still pass the House, but its chances there are good.

Because most of the money is earmarked for new construction, it won't help the current pressing question: How to fund the Malaspina dayboat run on northern Lynn Canal this summer, something that all Southeast communities have said they want. But since legislators didn't expect this \$142 million federal windfall for the ferries, perhaps they can find a fiscally responsible way to fund the Malaspina run, rather than mothballing one of the state's greatest assets at the beginning of the busiest travel season.



Yakutat to get summer ferry visits

Posted: Friday, April 03, 1998

One if by land, two if by sea. But what if it's neither?

Like Juneau, the 800-person community of Yakutat is without a road to take drivers in or out of town. Unlike Juneau, Yakutat doesn't have ferry service either.

The Alaska Marine Highway System plans to change that this summer, but only to a small degree. When it starts service in July, the new ferry Kennicott will offer ``whistle-stop" service in Yakutat on its way across the Gulf of Alaska to monthly calls in Seward.

The ferry will only stop if someone has a reservation to get on and off. Presuming people take advantage of the service, it would mean two visits a month in Yakutat in July, August and September.

Beyond that, ferry authorities have made no decision about more extensive service.

``That'll be a start to get the interest going on it," said Yakutat Mayor Daryl James.

``Hopefully in the future it will develop into more than one stop a month."

Yakutat, about 225 miles northwest of Juneau, does have jet service from Alaska Airlines. But the community has been lobbying for ferries, too, to bring tourists and business to Yakutat. James said a regular ferry visit would give residents another way in and out of town, and a cheaper way to ship vehicles and goods into Yakutat than barge service, which they now use.

The state originally planned on having the Kennicott make its first visit to Yakutat in June. According to Dennis Poshard of the state Department of Transportation, the delay in the Kennicott's delivery from the manufacturer means the ferry's first trip to Yakutat will be on a voyage that leaves Juneau on July 24.

The Kennicott will stop again in Yakutat on the return trip in a voyage that arrives in Juneau on July 28, but then won't visit Yakutat again for a month, Poshard said.

The schedule would make it easy for someone from Juneau to visit Yakutat for a couple of days, but doesn't provide convenient round-trip transportation to Yakutat residents.

``I don't think the once-a-month would be a drastic impact on us," said David Ramos Sr., who works for the Yakutat Tlingit Tribes. He said the monthly ferry service has ``some advantage for the local aspects, but for tourism or (commercial) impact it would probably be mild."

The trips across the Gulf of Alaska will not continue through the winter - Poshard said the gulf crossing is too difficult in bad weather - so Yakutat service will end in September.

No decision has been made about next year, Poshard said.

``We haven't committed to at this point anything past the summer schedule."



Kennicott sails into Bellingham

Posted: Tuesday, June 23, 1998

They now know it runs. Next, they have to clean it and make sure the keys fit the cabin doors.

Alaska Marine Highway officials are generally pleased with the condition of the new Kennicott ferry, which arrived in Bellingham, Wash., on Monday, said ferry system General Manager Bob Doll. He said the next several days will be spent cleaning and making minor repairs to the ship before it departs next Monday for a trial journey to Alaska.

“The ship has just completed a 4,000-mile voyage and her ability to operate is obvious,” he said today from a mobile phone on the vessel as it cruised through Bellingham Bay. “We need to make her a Marine Highway System ship which is ready to carry passengers, which is a different dimension than anything she's been asked to do at this point.”

The ship will be formally turned over to the Alaska Marine Highway at a July 3 ceremony in Juneau, said A.J. Rizzo, a spokesman for Halter Marine Group Inc., the Moss Point, Miss.,-based company that built the vessel. Its first passenger sailing will be July 5 from Ketchikan to Bellingham, with its maiden passenger voyage to Alaska scheduled for July 7.

Ferry officials planned to spend today on the 380-foot ocean-class vessel. Then Halter Marine will bring a cleaning crew aboard Wednesday, which will spend 24 straight hours tidying the ship, Doll said.

He said there is a six-page “to-do” list of projects ranging from minor to substantial, although not all must be done immediately.

One of the most important items needing immediate attention is getting final certification for an elevator that places vehicles on a multi-level car deck, Doll said. Other short-term projects include calibrating the ship's compass and smoothing out a sharp exterior edge that could wear down tie-up lines.

Deck drains installed during the voyage to Bellingham need to have rust scrubbed off and be painted. There is also art to be hung, computers to program, bulkheads to scrub and keys to match to rooms.

There were no mechanical problems of significance during the voyage from Mississippi, Doll said.

“I can only say that the crew that made the passage has been enthusiastic,” he said.

The Kennicott is the state's first new ferry in 20 years. It can carry up to 750 passengers, more than any of the fleet's other eight ships, and 120 vehicles. Its maiden voyage was originally scheduled June 2, but postponed because of construction delays.

State officials have estimated the fine to Halter Marine for the delay will be roughly \$200,000.

KTN DAILY NEWS JULY 11-12, 1998

End of the Wait

Alaska's newest ferry makes its debut

By NICOLE A. BONHAM

Daily news Staff Writer

From bow to stern, all 382 feet of her, Alaska's latest passenger ferry is brand-spanking new — as sparkling white as her namesake glacier, the Kennicott.

With a maximum beam of 85 feet, her draft at a bit more than 17.5 feet, the Kennicott carries up to 120 vehicles and nearly 750 passengers on Southeast runs for the Alaska Marine Highway System, some 500 passengers on its newly implemented cross-Gulf route.

She may appear a workhorse. An 80,000-pound capacity vehicle-elevator is her most prominent feature. But to Capt. Jonathan Ward, she's his "Miss Kennicott," at times a coquette, often a spirited filly.

No picture of grace, the Kennicott made headlines during its christening ceremony when — onlookers' cameras cocked and ready — she slid awkwardly off a Mississippi shipyard grid, dousing spectators with a wall of water and sending at least one Alaska dignitary on a precautionary trip to the hospital.

Built by Halter Marine Inc., of Moss Point, Miss., the Alaska ferry tarried in the balmy warmth of the Gulf of Mexico, her delivery date more than 52 days gone when she finally tied up in Bellingham last month.

More fodder for controversy awaited in Washington. Seattle-based U.S. Coast

M/V Kennicott

- Builder: Halter Marine, Inc. Moss Point, Miss.
- Contract awarded November 1995.
- Delivered June 1998.
- Displacement: 12,000 tons.
- Bow thruster: 450 kW
- Four 150-person life boats.
- Fourteen 50-person life rafts.
- Two rescue boats.
- 55-foot-square helicopter platform.

Guard inspectors discovered a possible design flaw where a passenger fire-escape route should have been. Another delay ensued — this time less than 48 hours — as her builders and Bellingham shipyard workers put their heads together for a quick fix. A steel bulkhead was installed on the starboard side of the cabin deck just forward of the purser's cabin.

"How could we have gotten to this point and not have that deficiency recognized? You'll have to talk to the Coast Guard," said ferry system manager Capt. Bob Doll.

"These plans have been under very thorough consideration for years," he said. "We had a rather precise plan in place with the Coast Guard office in Juneau and the Coast Guard office in Mobile, Ala., to see to it that they did not come up with any contradictory

The new Alaska state ferry Kennicott made its debut visit to Ketchikan on the misty morning of July 5. The vessel is the first new addition to the Alaska Marine Highway Fleet since 1977.

Staff photo by Hall Anderson

views, that they would discuss every decision between them and not contend with different organizations arriving at different conclusions."

The Seattle Coast Guard office that discovered the escape-route concern was not a party to those ongoing discussions, according to Doll.

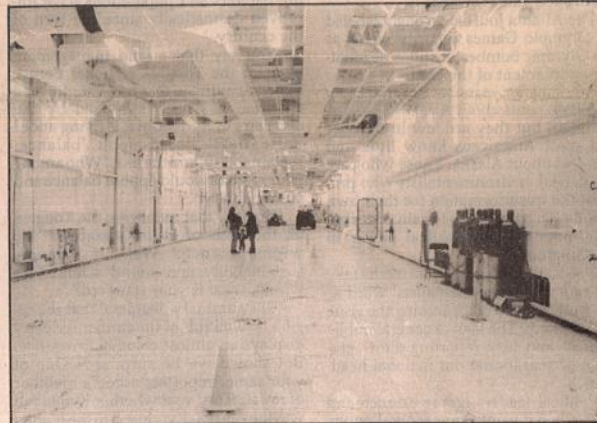
"They came up with a different conclusion. That's life," he said. "The builder has corrected it."

A permanent fix will likely involve another door to the outside weather-deck, said Mike Hattier, Halter Marine's program manager for the project.

"The (fixes) that are on there will do the job, but the Coast Guard wants something additional," Hattier said. "The Coast Guard wants an additional means of escape for the people in the forward, C-class cabins to go outside."

Awaiting the Kennicott's departure from Bellingham this month, Hattier estimated the Washington emergency construction cost the company some \$10,000. Doll said the permanent fix is scheduled for September during a period already set aside for regular warranty review. The ship builder will cover the cost of the escape-route modifications.

"It's kind of like taking your car to the garage, there's nothing really inexpensive," said Gerry Egan, AMHS's project manager for the Kennicott. "The exact cost I wouldn't even guess at.... It will require essentially putting two doors into steel bulkheads, one of which will have to be a water-tight door. The material costs will probably be something under \$2,000 and the labor I would guess at. It depends who does it and what conditions they have to work under."



A couple and their son tour the ferry Kennicott's spacious car deck Sunday.

Staff photo by Hall Anderson

Home waters

The Kennicott traversed Alaska waters for the first time on July 1 in southern Dixon Entrance.

"Today, Miss Kennicott has been a beautiful ride," Ward said while en route. "We've had no new dragons to slay."

But that was before a brief power glitch in Sumner Strait near the mouth of the Wrangell Narrows sent the crew trouble-shooting. The incident occurred during a routine transfer of power from one generator to another. Initial word was that it stemmed from a switch failure in the control panel. Another of the vessel's four generators picked up

the slack and engineers are studying what caused the temporary glitch.

In all, however, the shakedown trip June 29 through July 3 in Southeast waters was mostly smooth sailing and the culmination of advance training for the Kennicott's crew.

As with any new vessel, last-minute touch-ups such as organizing the galley and final cleaning dominated the crews' time. At the Bellingham dock, painters dangled from the Kennicott's several decks giving a finishing touch to the railings. An honorary first cargo of Alaska pioneers was aboard for the trip. The group gave each light switch

See "Kennicott," page B-5



Third Mate Ron Leighton, who lives in Ketchikan when not aboard Alaska's ferries, stands lookout on the bridge as the Kennicott traveled Clarence Strait recently.

Staff photo by Nicole A. Bonham

Saturday/Sunday, July 11-12, 1998
KETCHIKAN DAILY NEWS

OUTDO

Kennicott

Continued from page B-1

a flip, every tap a twist, ferreting out potential problems before the ship would carry actual fare-paying passengers.

"For example, we spent an enormous amount of time designing the galley and the mess area. But even now we've discovered we have a problem in the line that goes up to the cash register — the coffee service is right there in the same line," Doll noted. "We'll need to modify that."

The Kennicott offers 85 staterooms with 266 regular berths. New on this vessel is the "roomette" concept — an inexpensive, scaled-down version of a cabin that's meant to offer walk-on passengers some shelter and privacy. For example, roomette fare for a trip from Ketchikan to Wrangell starts at \$15.

For the long haul, Ketchikan to Juneau, a room with a window rings in at \$34.

Other new features include a helicopter landing pad, telephones in each cabin, a theater and more than \$100,000 in Alaska art, including works by Ketchikan artists Holly Churchill, Terry Pyles and Ernest Smeltzer.

The state's One Percent for Art program funded the gallery of masks, murals and even a model of Capt. James Cook's sailing ship, the *Endeavor*.

Convenient for business travelers, the satellite communication system aboard offers reliable voice, fax and e-mail capabilities.

In a disaster, the ship also could be

used as a communication center and is equipped to serve as an oil-spill response vessel.

Design and construction

The Kennicott is the first large ocean-going passenger vessel designed and built in the U.S. since 1952. It's also the first new ferry for Alaska since the *Aurora* came online in 1977.

The Kennicott replaces the *Malaspina* in its mainline route through Southeast each week from Bellingham to Juneau and points north.

Monthly during the summertime, the vessel transits the turbulent waters of Alaska's Gulf. The Kennicott is the second of the fleet's ocean-class vessels. The 296-foot *Tustumena*, which travels the Aleutian chain, is the state's only other.

Brought aboard by state transportation officials to direct the Kennicott's construction, Gerry Egan followed it from the concept's inception in 1992 to reality, riding the vessel north from Bellingham on its shakedown run.

Egan, the ferry's two captains and crew all speak highly of the its maneuverability and speed. Her maximum design speed is 19 knots. For roll stabilization, she features a fin system that broadens the ship's beam to 110 feet when deployed.

"Even in the worst weather we had coming around the (Panama Canal), we could have played pool," said Chief Mate Scott Hamilton. The Haines man tells of the ship's initial sea trials in the Gulf of Mexico when, unpainted and still very much needing a final spit shine, the Kennicott's responsiveness

was put to the test.

She stopped within two ship lengths and turned in her own radius.

From the bridge to the engine-room, that story has grown to folkloric proportions — alongside recollections of the Halter captain's response, muttered in a thick, Mississippi brogue: "She sho' ain't pretty, but she sho' can dance."

Now in regular service, with the ribbons and balloons tucked away, the Kennicott this month played a role in a definitive moment in Alaska Marine Highway history.

On July 1, in the dark waters of Canada's Strait of Georgia, the ferries Kennicott and *Malaspina* literally passed in the night. One ship is among the state's oldest, brought online with the first batch of passenger ferries in 1963. The other is the new kid on the block, a showy, high-tech version to carry Alaska's passenger service into the 21st Century.

Even more irony: when the ships' paths crossed, the aged *Malaspina* was on its last voyage south to Bellingham before being deployed to service Lynn Canal. Alaska's first First Lady — Neva Egan — was aboard the Kennicott at the time.

When both she and the marine highway were younger, she had christened the *Malaspina* and three other Alaska state ferries during her husband's years as governor.

"At 1 a.m. this morning, the old and the new passed in the Strait of Georgia," Doll announced that day aboard the new vessel. "I think each was glad to see the other."



Ferry performed beautifully

Posted: Wednesday, January 13, 1999

By

THE JUNEAU EMPIRE

From all accounts, the first winter Gulf crossing of the Alaska state ferry Kennicott was a resounding success. The fin stabilizers kept passengers and crew comfortable in the high seas, and legislators and staffers were able to bring their vehicles to Juneau without making the overland trip.

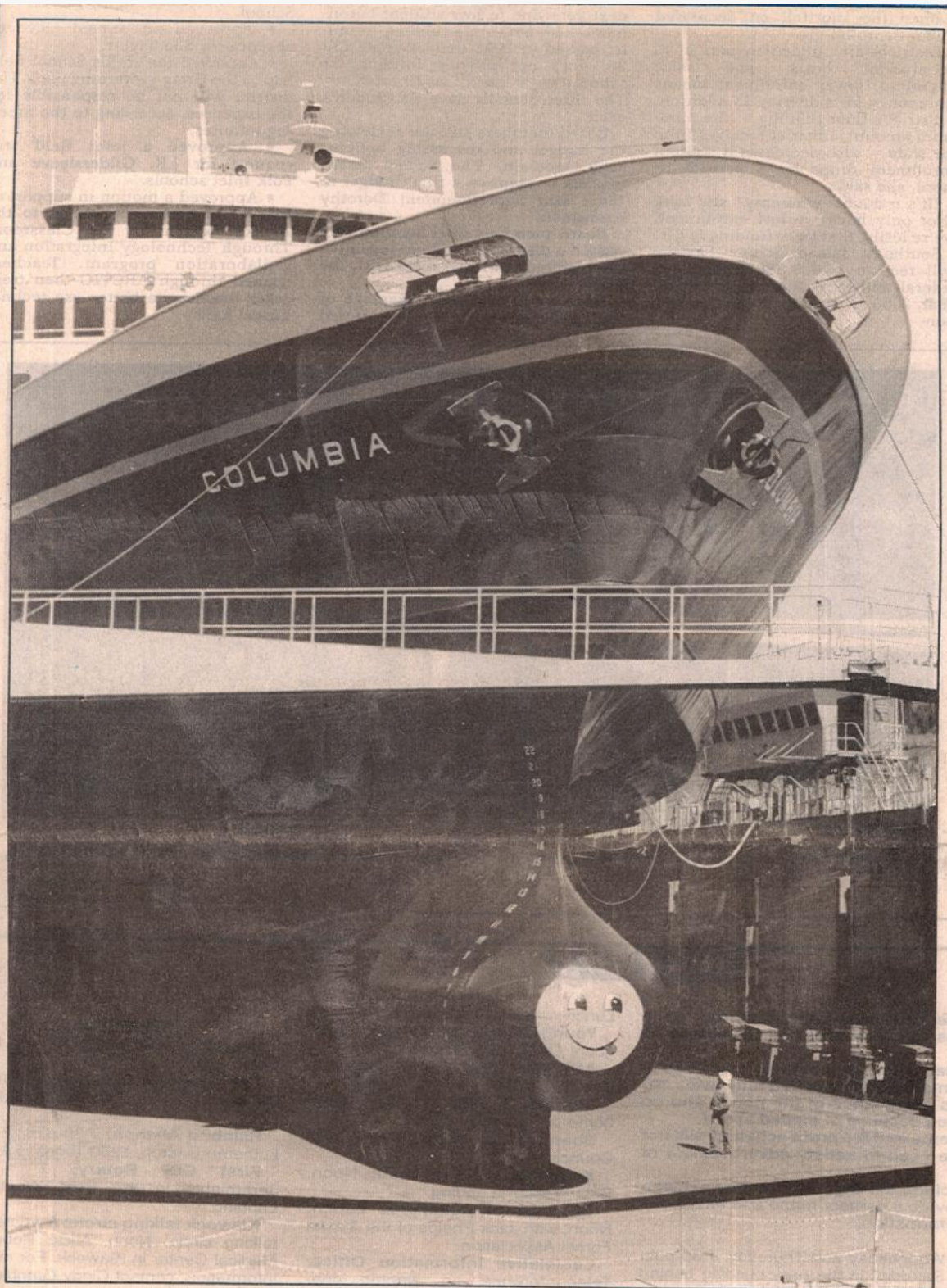
The ferry system gets more than its fair share of criticism. People complain about ferries being late or service to communities being cut back, but rarely do we hear people complimenting the Alaska Marine Highway System for its overall responsiveness to transportation needs. This special trip of the Kennicott was an example of how the ferry system often responds to the transportation needs of Alaskans.

Other examples of responsiveness include changing schedules to provide ferries to communities that are expecting numerous people to travel for potlatches or basketball games. Sometimes the ferries will wait in port for the games to finish so that students can return to their home communities.

The Alaska Marine Highway System has done a good job in responding to the needs of Alaskans. We hope legislators, when considering transportation needs of Alaskans, will remember that responsiveness and reward the good performance of the Marine Highway System with continued support during the budgeting process.

ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

- 50th ANNIVERSARY -



Face-lift

Doug Miller, ship superintendent for the Alaska Ship and Dry Dock, gives the state ferry Columbia one last perusal Tuesday morning before it is refloated. Crew members gave the ship's bow a new smiley face Monday evening.

4/28/1999

Staff photo by Hall Anderson

Reprinted with permission of the Ketchikan Daily News

Captain Bill Hopkins Collection

Long, deep ferry no problem for Seldovia, dock

THE LONG-ANTICIPATED KENNICOTT made its gala arrival in Seldovia last week. Despite raw, snowy weather and the disappointment that local Bill Hopkins wasn't in command, a sizable portion of the community — including a group of hooky-playing junior high boys and a marine salute by Craig Higman — turned out to welcome it in. Fears of the vessel's 382-foot length and 18-foot draft making her unmanageable in the tight confines of Seldovia Bay were laid to rest as Capt. Jonathan Ward smoothly spun it around and sidled it up to the dock. Initial announcements gave a scant, 10-minute layover in Seldovia, but City Manager Dave Choquette quickly got in touch with Alaska Marine Highway System staff, who delayed departure by more than an hour. A Chamber of Commerce contingent gave the new ferry an official welcome to Seldovia and stocked it with tourist information brochures, while residents toured the ship, making inevitable comparisons with the familiar and homey "Trusty Tusty." Those who missed the event can see photos of the ship docking in Seldovia at www.xyz.net/~rcolson/kennicott.htm. The Kennicott is due to return to Seldovia next Tuesday, and when it does, Ward confirmed, it will be under the command of Capt. Hopkins.

THE SELDOVIA PLANNING COMMISSION held a special meeting last Monday but took no action with respect to Kenai Peninsula Borough Ordinance 99-01, currently before the Borough Assembly, which would zone residential subdivisions outside city limits. Although the meeting was sparsely attended, the commission did approve nominations to the four Comprehensive Plan

Committees (Demographic Data, Business & Economy, Natural Resources and Human Resources) and the Steering Committee so that they could begin work. Adjourning the meeting to a Comprehensive Plan Work Session, Commission Chair Sunni Hilts led the group in further brainstorming for plan elements. With participants commenting in favor of a return to the "old ways," Walt Sonen spoke to nods when he called for less dependence on "fluff" industries like tourism and a return to the "gristle" of an operating cannery and timber products industry. Other committee members said they hoped to come up with more ways to tap the wealth of retirees and summer visitors to benefit "real" year-round Seldovians. Hilts emphasized that the Commission is still looking for additional committee members and said that she plans to hold work sessions after all scheduled P&Z meetings. The next Comprehensive Plan event will be a "visioning" session led by University of Alaska Extension Service facilitator Bob Gorman, rescheduled from Saturday to April 24.

WHILE SNOWBANKS PERSIST, however, the Fire Department has issued a reminder that residents need to keep their local fire hydrants dug clear to prevent damage by snow removal equipment.

IT'S DEFINITE: SPRING is coming to Seldovia. The Garden Club held its second meeting this week. Synergy opened for the season, joining All Saints Gallery and the Buzz. Several seasonal residents were seen driving off last week's ferry. SKIAP director Dede Higman, while

confessing to some nervousness as to just where in all the snow this year's Easter Egg Hunt will be held, expects to announce definite plans later this week for the annual egg-dying and hunt. With some of the heavy snow banks

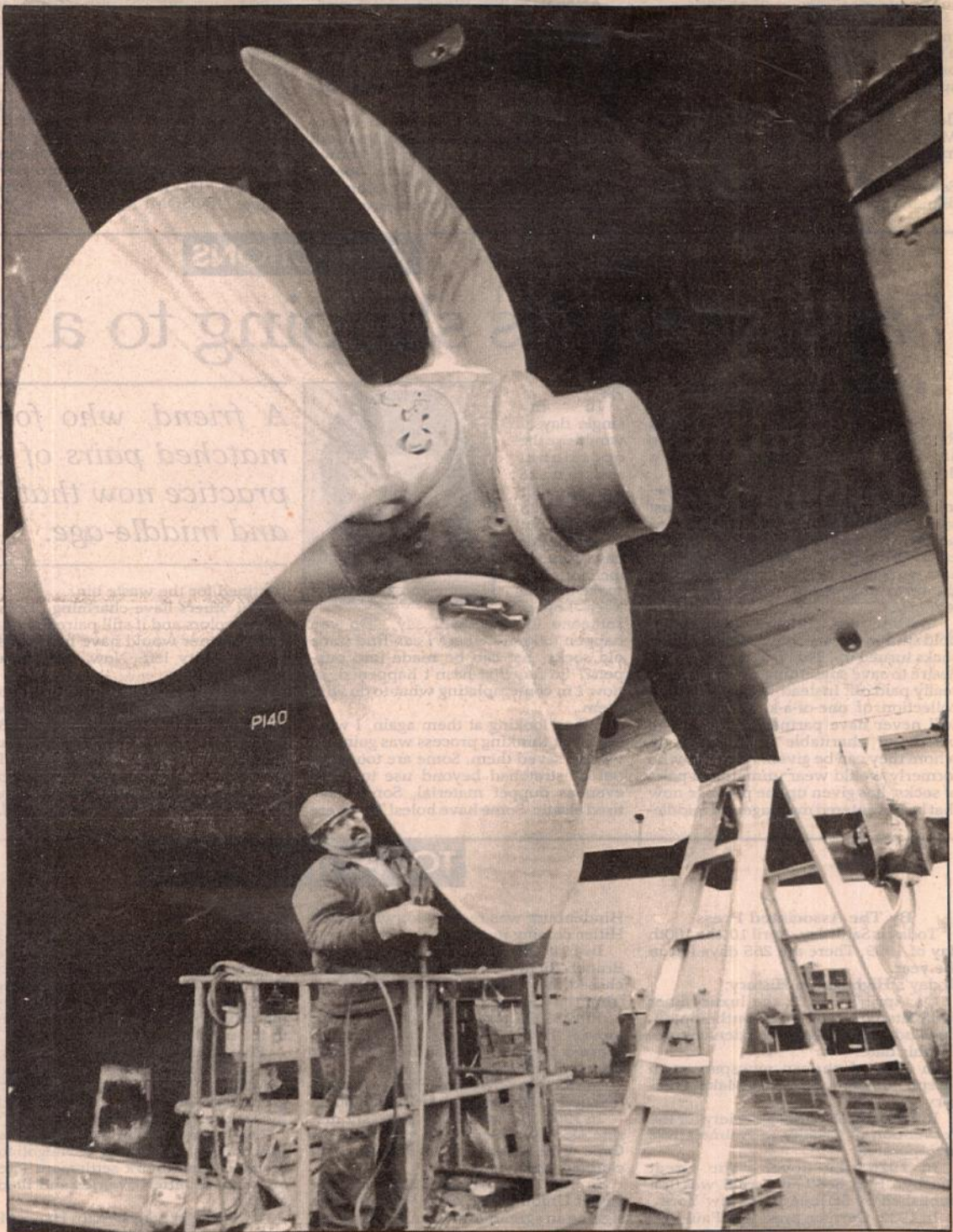
beginning to melt, water levels in "Lake Seldovia," otherwise known as Main Street, are rising. No one has picked up their mail by canoe yet this year, but Chamber of Commerce webmaster Helen Hille is keeping a close watch on the situation with her digital camera and keeping her postings to the site (www.xyz.net/~seldovia) updated.

SCHOOL SPRING BREAK doesn't begin until next week, but students get an extra two days off today and tomorrow for district Inservice Days. Parent Teacher conferences will be held, however, and scheduling questions should be directed to the school office at 234-7616. Meanwhile all of Seldovia is holding its breath in eager anticipation of further successes by this year's remarkable boys basketball team, now at state. For those who may not have left yet, Homer Air is offering a special round trip "basketball fare." Details are available at 235-8591.



ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

- 50th ANNIVERSARY -



Heavy metal

Les Lawrence of Alaska Ship and Drydock Inc., cleans and inspects one of the propellers on the Kennicott state ferry Tuesday. The 382-foot ship was at the Ketchikan Shipyard for its first annual inspection required by the Coast Guard and American Bureau of Shipping. The work is part of the first multi-year, multi-vessel contract between Alaska Ship & Drydock and the state Department of Transportation's Alaska Marine Highway System. The shipyard also is doing some warranty work on behalf of the ship's builder, Halter Marine.

Photo by Seanna O'Sullivan

4/10/1999

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Captain Bill Hopkins Collection

ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

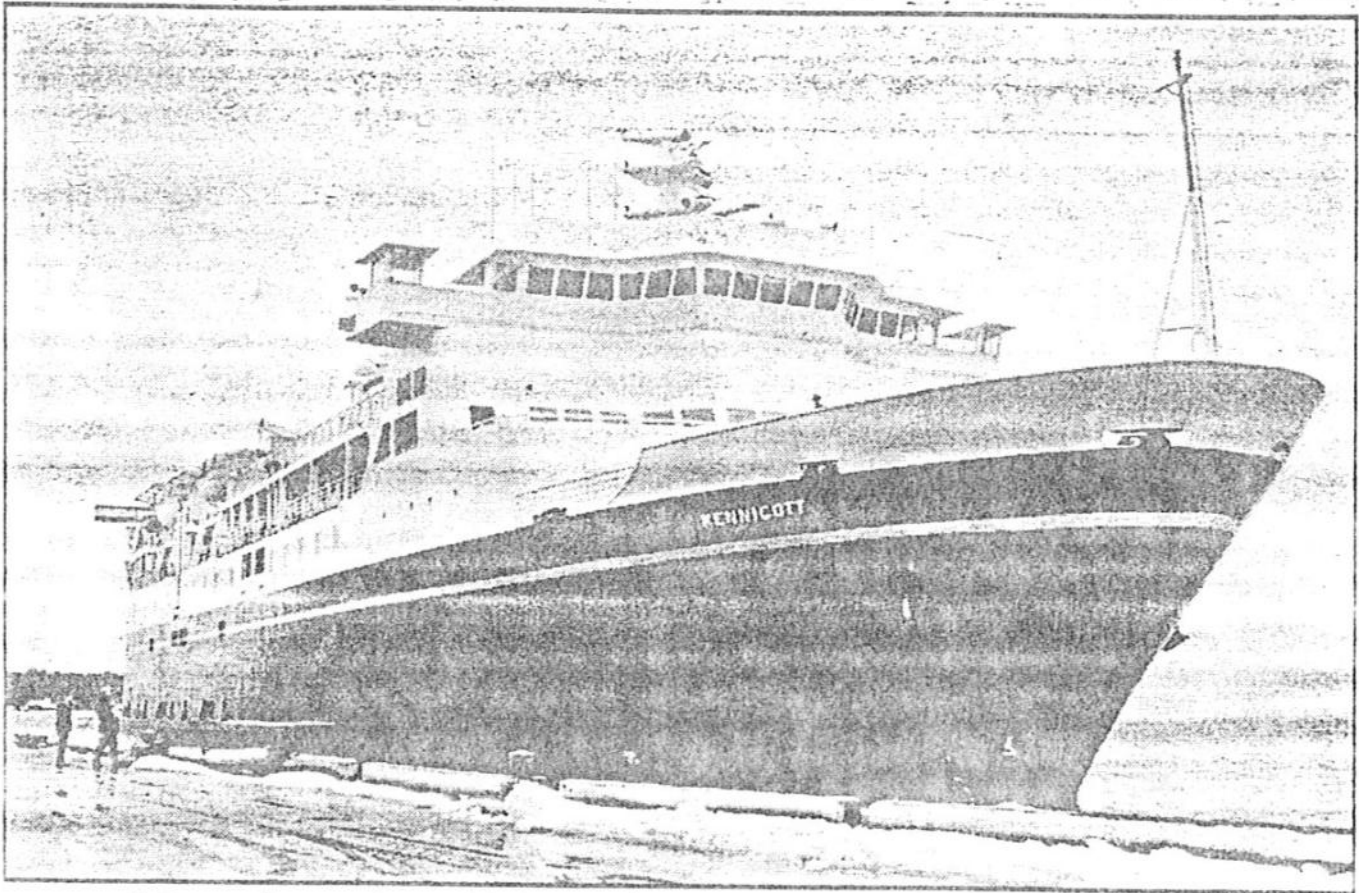
- 50th ANNIVERSARY -

Thursday, March 25, 1999

The Cordova Times

Friday, March 25

New ship at the slip



Toni Bocci/for The Times

Making its first stop in Cordova, the M/V Kennicott wowed Cordovans at a reception and open house March 20. The Kennicott is the newest vessel of the Alaska Marine Highway System fleet and started service last summer. Built by Halter Marine Group of Gulfport, Miss., at a cost of more than \$80 million, the ferry is 382 feet long, 35 feet wide, with nine decks and a capacity for 748 passengers, 320 berthing accommodations and space for 120 standard automobiles. Driven by two 6,690 horsepower Wartsile 32E diesel engines with a speed of 16.75 knots, the vessel is ocean certified and can serve double duty as a command and logistics communication center during an oil spill or natural disaster. The Kennicott will be serving Southeast Alaska communities and Valdez and Seward

Reprinted with permission of The Cordova Times

Captain Bill Hopkins Collection

Sande retires from marine highway

Captain leaves after 35 years of service

By DARREN FRIEDEL

Daily News Staff Writer

After 35 years of hauling residents and tourists all over Southeast Alaska, Jan Sande has decided to retire from the Alaska Marine Highway System.

The Ketchikan resident, who was born in Seattle and raised in Ketchikan, worked on all the ferries serving Southeast and finished his illustrious career as captain of the Alaska ferry Aurora.

When Sande started his career on the Matanuska in 1963, the Alaska Marine Highway was a new system.

"I was on the Matanuska for a number of years," Sande said. "Things were pretty stable and people weren't moving around as much as they do now a days."

He eventually jumped up the ranks to relief second mate and began floating around from ship to ship.

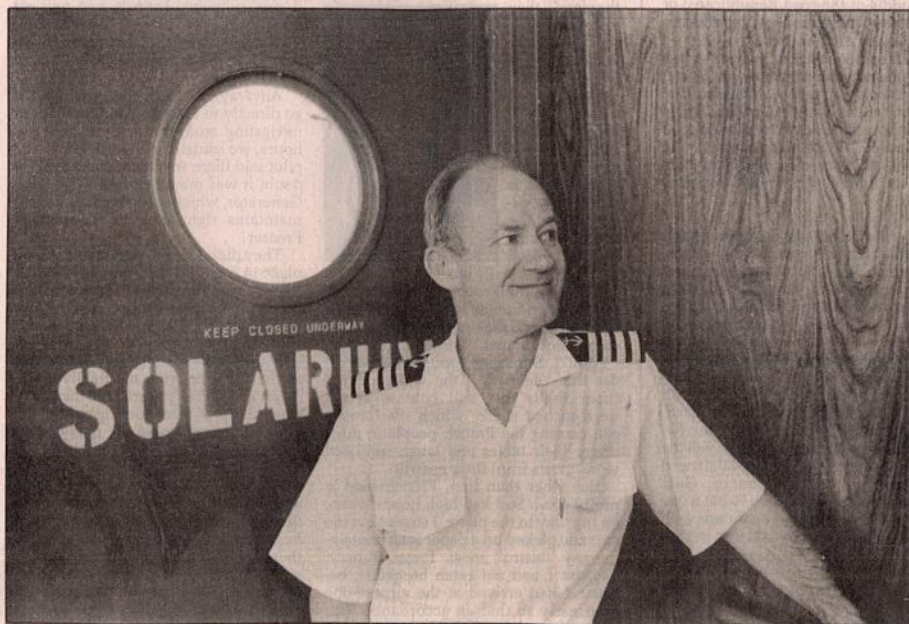
In 1969 he once again found himself aboard the Matanuska.

Later in his career, Sande piloted both the LeConte and the Aurora.

He captained the Aurora for 10 years before deciding on retirement.

Sande said the Alaska Marine Highway System now is different from the earlier years. "The change," he said, "isn't bad or good, it's just different."

"When the system just started, it was our highway," he said. "Then it switched



Capt. Jan Sande takes a break from his duties in the solarium on board the Alaska ferry Aurora in this August 1997 file photo.

Staff photo by Hall Anderson

over in the 70s to a more touristy (concept.) They changed the theme to accommodate the tourists, which isn't a bad thing. But on the Aurora and the LeConte it was like going back in time because the original concept is with those ferries. They are for the

(local) people.

"I enjoyed working on those ships because we were hauling local people," he said. "It was nice to talk to all the people. That was the part I enjoyed. Being an old-time Alaskan, like I am, that was an enjoyable experience."

Sande's father also spent his life as a mariner.

His father was a local fisherman and also worked for the Alaska Marine Highway for 20 years, said Sande.

He credits an incident with his father as the beginning of his

maritime livelihood.

"I started my sea-going career when I was about two or three years old when I fell off my father's fishing boat down at City Float," he said. "That's where it all started."

Even with the nasty weather that can arise in Southeast, only once did Sande have to turn around and wait for a storm to die down.

"We were going through the Clarence Strait, and it was blowing about 90," he said. "I had to call Ketchikan and let them know we were delayed."

"That's the only time I had to wait. All the other times I was able to sneak through," he said.

The weather sometimes made it hard for the ferries to dock on time, even if the vessel was in port, according to Sande.

"On a Christmas Day trip from Hollis to Ketchikan, a quick storm came up," he said. "By the time we got into the channel it was blowing hard."

The boat made it into Ketchikan but the fierce wind made it difficult for the vessel to be tied to the dock, delaying the passengers, said Sande.

"Some time later, I was coming back from Prince of Wales Island, chatting with a guy and he didn't know who I was, but he was complaining about how long it took to get into dock (that particular) time," Sande said. "I just chuckled to myself. You just can't please everybody."

Sande said his retirement gives him more time to work on a cabin he's been building on Marble Island.

He enjoys the outdoors and plans on doing a lot more fishing and gardening but at his own pace, said Sande.

"There's not enough time in a day to do everything you want," he said. "So, I just (stop) and start again the next day."

Sande is married to Stephanie Rainwater, who is president of Ketchikan Indian Corporation.

ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

- 50th ANNIVERSARY -

Alaskan SOUTHEASTER

October 1999

Sitka's Prospector Strides
into Second Half-Century

Aerial Acrobatics

The Kennicott Joins the
Fleet

Behind the Power

The Music & Magic of Birch
Boy Syrup



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Captain Bill Hopkins Collection

ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

- 50th ANNIVERSARY -



The Kennicott joins the fleet

story and photos by Jeff Merron

The M/V *Kennicott* is heading into Wrangell Narrows, the trickiest waters on her route through Alaska's Inside Passage, a 24-mile thoroughfare notorious all over the West Coast as a test for ships and crews. As the Alaska Marine Highway's newest ferry vessel leaves behind her "Little Norway", the fishing town of Petersburg at the north end of the Narrows, heading toward Wrangell, 32 miles away, past the south end of the passage, the first team is on the bridge, including one extra officer for the exacting navigation ahead; Master John Ward, Chief Mate Scott Hamilton and Second Mate Wayne Carnes, all licensed as pilots as well as deck officers. Ordinary Seaman Karl Ashenbrenner is at the wheel, attention fixed on the magnetic and gyro compasses as he listens for course commands from Hamilton, acting as pilot.

"Up at 248", meaning degrees—almost due west.

"248." Ashenbrenner repeats, acknowledging that he's heard the command as Hamilton faces

forward, watching the land and water ahead.

"Left 5"; the terms "port" and "starboard" have gone the way of square riggers and tarred pigtailed.

"Left 5." "Left 5." "Left 5." "173." "173." "72 is fine." "72." "173." "173."

The *Kennicott* is moving ahead at well under her 16-knot cruising speed as she heads into the maze of rocks, reefs, shoals, points, islands and navigation markers that line Wrangell Narrows. The passage is in spots barely twice her 85-foot beam and leaves only a few feet of water under the keel. The Narrows connects Frederick Sound with Sumner Strait, separating Mitkof Island from Kupreanof and Woewodski Islands. It's been a shortcut for navigation from the time

of the Russian mariners who named those islands and today the only alternative route for a vessel the size of the M/V *Kennicott* would mean sailing far to the west and adding many hours to a run already so tightly scheduled there's no room for delay.



Art Smith

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Captain Bill Hopkins Collection

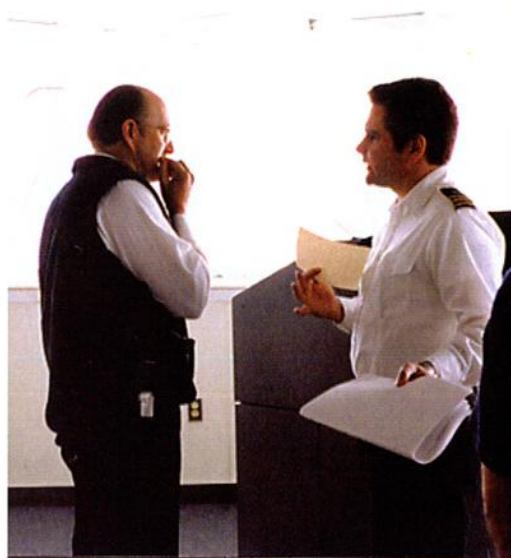
ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

- 50th ANNIVERSARY -



The first team is on the bridge, Master John Ward, Chief Mate Scott Hamilton and Second Mate Wayne Carnes.

The *M/V Kennicott* heading into Wrangell Narrows, the trickiest water in Alaska's Inside Passage.



The *Kennicott* is 382 feet long, 85 feet wide, almost 15,000 tons—a figure that refers not to the vessel's actual weight but to her carrying capacity, according to a complex standard formula. Just over a year before this late-May voyage south from Skagway, Haines and Juneau, in April, 1998, she was plying the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, a brand-new ship, just launched into the Mississippi River by her builders, Halter Marine Group, undergoing strenuous sea trials before heading through the Panama Canal and up the West Coast of North America to be taken over by the State of Alaska.

Skipper Ward has been with the *Kennicott* since the beginning; he worked on her design review committee and joined her for the sea trials, breaking in the engines, testing her for maneuverability, checking out every single system aboard the ship. Even after almost a full year in regular service, the process goes on; a ship like the *Kennicott* is a one-of-a-kind creation, designed and built from scratch. She is full of hydraulic systems, for example, all custom-made, which Chief Mate Hamilton says can be what he calls a maintenance nightmare.

Second Mate Carnes acknowledges

there are still bugs being worked out but says: "Our ship is much better than she was a year ago; she's a great ship." Officers and crew alike are loyal to their new vessel and say many of the complaints about her from the public have been because of a tight schedule worked out by bureaucrats with little idea of the practical realities of operating a ship. Routine maintenance has to be done while the ship is in operation, and what can't be fixed on the fly has to wait until a winter break in the schedule allows for major work to be undertaken in a shipyard or dry dock.

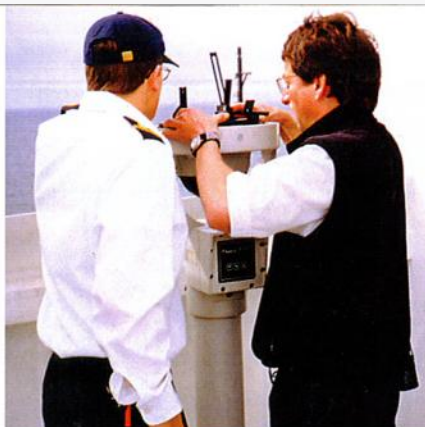
When the *Kennicott* joined the Alaska Marine Highway fleet last summer at Bellingham, southern terminus of the ferry system, and started her maiden voyage north to Alaska, she was the first new vessel in more than 20 years, and is a very different ship from any of her predecessors. Discussion of the system that became the Marine Highway first began around the time of statehood, to fulfill a very real need for transportation in the Southeast Alaska region. The Alaska Steamship Company during the early 1950s ceased operation of the fleet of vessels, *Baranof*, *Denali*, *Alaska* and *Aleutian*, that carried passengers and freight back and forth from Puget

Sound and among the larger ports in the region. At the same time aircraft were taking over from the contract "mail boats" that had conveyed passenger, freight and mail service among the smaller places. Juneau and Ketchikan had the only airports in the region, with DC6's and Lockheed Super Constellations providing service from Seattle-Tacoma, and air service everywhere else was by smaller outfits flying seaplanes or amphibious aircraft. All this left a real lack of affordable transportation by sea, and though automobiles and trucks could be carried from port to port by the tug and barge services that moved heavy freight, there was no way for people to travel with their vehicles.

The ferry system started small, with a stubby little car ferry, *Chilkat* that plied the waters between Juneau and the Alaska Highway connection at Haines. She's still afloat, 40 years later, though long out of State service and still with the distinctive hull color that all Marine Highway vessels since have shared and that has given them collectively *Chilkats* nickname, the "Blue Canoe". The Marine Highway in its present form came into being in 1963 with the three original big vessels able to provide service to Southeastern from Prince

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They have
to pay
close
attention,
or else...



Rupert, British Columbia. *Taku*, *Malaspina* and *Matanuska*, all still sailing, long past their original designed working lives, all in the meantime extensively stretched, rebuilt, re-equipped and updated. In 1964, the *Tustumena* was added in Southwestern Alaska to connect Kodiak Island with mainland ports. Over the next few years, a big Swedish ferry, the *Stenna Britannia*, built for service on the Baltic was purchased, renamed the *Wickersham*, and sailed Southeast until she was sold again in 1974. Another big ferry, the *Columbia*, and two smaller vessels for service within the region, the *LeConte* and the *Aurora* were built for the Marine Highway in the 1970s.

The *Kennicott*, named like the others, for an Alaskan glacier, is the only one besides *Tustumena* built as an ocean-going vessel, rather than being designed to operate primarily on the relatively-sheltered waters of the Inside Passage. Thus the new ship started out making monthly runs as far west as Seward, and it can fill in for *Tustumena* when that vessel is due for shipyard time. Another feature shared by the *Kennicott* and *Tustumena* is a huge onboard vehicle elevator aft, which enables more flexibility in loading, unloading and stow-

ing vehicles than is possible for the drive-on, drive-off ships. However, unlike any of the other vessels, *Kennicott* is designed to serve as a communications and cleanup center in a large oil spill or natural disaster, and thus equipped with a helicopter pad, decontamination showers, five-ton crane, a floating dock she carries aboard knocked down to be deployed off the stern to provide moorage for smaller vessels, and a state-of-the-art satellite communication system. That emergency system is in addition to the regular radios, radar's, Global Positioning System and other electronics used for communications and navigation. Even with all the modern equipment available, however, *Kennicott's* deck officers still use traditional navigation techniques to run their vessel and double-check the electronics.

Second Officer Wayne Carnes, who in the meantime has taken over from Scott Hamilton as pilot for the run through the Narrows:

"The most important tools we have are our eyes and our brains. Our number-one priority is looking out the windows. There are a lot of things that radar has trouble picking up, like kayaks those I usually see because I'll see the light flash off a paddle

blade." As Carnes mentions that the crew regularly notes the magnetic compass headings, to check radar readings and the gyrocompass, he's scanning the land and waters ahead of the ship, and issuing navigation orders to Karl Ashenbrenner at the helm:

"Let's go three left rudder."

"Left three 128 is true magnetic course."

"Left 112."

"Left 112."

Carnes is close to the top of the *Kennicott's* chain of command. "Really, the Chief Mate and the Chief Engineer run the ship for the Captain," he remarks. As Second Mate, Carnes often serves as pilot, and takes over for the Chief Mate when the first officer is not on the bridge. To get to his place, Carnes attended the California Maritime Academy, got his Coast Guard license, and worked 11 years on other Alaska Marine Highway vessels. Like all of the ferry systems deck officers, he's licensed as a first class pilot. To get such a ticket is not like getting a driver's license; it involves first of all a minimum of 12 round trips throughout the entire Southeast Alaska region, visiting every port. This process takes months and pilot candidates aren't paid for it. Then there are a

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It takes careful planning to get the right vehicles on and off at the right ports. In the summer the car deck is generally packed solid with cars, vans, campers, trucks and cargo trailers, parked bumper to bumper.

series of 19 exams, each lasting five hours, covering the entire region. Each of those exams is in two parts. In the first, the candidate must sketch from memory a detailed navigation chart of the area in question; Wrangell Narrows, say. In the second part, the would-be pilot must provide a detailed route description, covering winds, weather, tides, currents and other navigational considerations on the route. To become a pilot, all 19 exams must be passed.

The starting level for a newly qualified deck officer is as a Third Mate—when such a position becomes available. At least a year's experience is required to go on to the next level, Second Mate, and again for each of the next two steps. To Chief Mate and Captain/Master. There are always more qualified officers than there are jobs available and Carnes remarks:

"Most of the people here have licensing well above the level they're working at."

As the *Kennicott* goes about her business of carrying people, vehicles and cargo from where they are to where they need to be, all 53 crew members from Skipper John Ward to the stewards are kept aware that a lot can go wrong aboard a ship at sea, and there are frequent drills on dealing with every possibility from collision to bomb threat to man overboard, a total of 19 different drills. Some of these, such as abandon ship, fire/explosion and lifeboat launch, are carried out weekly.

Others are monthly or every three or six months. When a drill is called, every

crew member must participate, on-duty or off, and each crew member has two assigned stations, one for fire and emergency, one for abandon ship. The drills don't normally involve passengers, and many of those riding the *Kennicott* may never notice that the exercises are going on. A particular task of the stewards in a real emergency would be mustering the passengers together, keeping them calm and informed, and preparing them for what may be a long wait before they have to do anything "It takes a long time for a ship to sink," remarks Chief Mate Scott Hamilton, "and in these waters, before we sink we're going to run the ship ashore if we have to."

As the *Kennicott* proceeds on south, Ward, Hamilton and Carnes on the bridge discuss a drill about to start, in this case, a fire in the engine room. "Here we go; it's show time," says Ward, and for the next hour the action is almost nonstop throughout the ship, as crew members find the fire and fight it—and the mock emergency builds up to an abandon-ship order and the actual lowering of a lifeboat. An hour and a half after the drill starts the crew assembles in the ship's theater to review what happened and how it went. A major lesson of this drill, Hamilton remarks, is that if there's a fire in the engine room "we have to set boundaries," meaning closing doors air tight to isolate the fire from the rest of the vessel.

The *Kennicott's* complement includes not only the deck crew that operates the

ship and the engineers who keep the machinery running, but the "hotel" staff; cooks, servers, cashiers, storekeeper, bartender, room stewards, most of them tending to the needs of up to 750 passengers scattered over four decks and in 110 cabins and roomettes. In charge of dispensing what he calls "Alaskan hospitality" is the *Kennicott's* Chief steward, Mike Anderson, a veteran of 29 years with the Marine Highway system, 24 of those in the other ocean-going vessel, the *Tustumena*. He's proud of the ferry system, his ship and the work of his crew: "We're where the action is. Where the people are."

...up to 750 passengers scattered over four decks and in 110 cabins and roomettes.

Among the particular duties that fall to Chief Mate Scott Hamilton is keeping charge of the car deck, which especially during the summer is generally packed solid with passenger cars, vans, campers, trucks and cargo trailers, parked bumper to bumper with barely room for a person to squeeze sideways between them.

Getting the right vehicles on and off at the right ports requires careful planning, the more so because the vehicles drive off the same way they came aboard—unlike, say, the Puget Sound ferries where cars drive on at one end and off the other as the vessel reverses direction each trip. It takes intricate maneuvering to get each vehicle aboard the *Kennicott*, parked in its proper place, and off again. The massive vehicle elevator adds to the possibilities but also to the complexity of the task. A visitor to the vessel asks Hamilton if there's a computer program he uses to help fit the cargo aboard; the Chief Mate points to his own head. "It's all up here." He has to allow too for standbys, late arrivals and no-shows.

The number of campers and out-of-state vehicles among those aboard the *Kennicott* is one of the things that points up the great changes that have occurred with the Marine Highway since the original Blue Canoes sailed almost four decades ago. It was designed to help Southeast Alaska residents move around the region, but the transportation picture looks very different now.

Sitka, Wrangell and Petersburg now have airports capable of handling Alaska Airlines passenger jets, and Ketchikan has a new airport at a more convenient loca-

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tion than the old one. In addition, especially in summer, far more of the people using the ferries are from outside Alaska than from inside the region as word has gotten around that the ferries are more economical than touring by air or by cruise ship, offering much more freedom and flexibility than the cruise ships, visiting

Whatever the future turns out to hold for the Alaska Marine Highway System, the *Kennicott* is sure to be part of it...

many smaller ports where the big tour vessels don't put in, and providing the opportunity to meet Alaskans as well as just other tourists.

At the same time many of the communities in the region are extending their road systems. A new draft plan for transportation in Southeast Alaska for the next millennium provides for many changes, including high-speed ferries to link Sitka with mainline vessels such as the *Kennicott* at a new terminal to be built on Chatham Strait. A new semi-private regional authority plans to operate ferries linking the towns on Prince of Wales Island to Ketchikan and ultimately to Wrangell and Petersburg. That will also involve new ferry terminals, and some of the other road projects being planned or carried out in the region may make new terminals necessary or at least possible.

Whatever the future turns out to hold for the Alaska Marine Highway System, the *Kennicott* is sure to be part of it, still getting from where she's been to where she's going by means of good old-fashioned navigation, with sharp eyes on the bridge and an alert steersman at the wheel—just as she's doing now, going into the trickiest part of the Narrows, with a lookout posted.

The anchors are ready to trip should they be needed to help bring the ship to an emergency stop.

Captain Ward says to the rest of the crew on the bridge, "We better pay attention here. Don't get too far to the right."

"Don't get too far to the left." ■

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ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

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AROUND JUNEAU

Alaska's Marine Highway ship rescues Canadian fishermen

JUNEAU — Within hours of a rescue drill, the state ferry Kennicott did a real rescue for the first time.

The Kennicott was an hour north of Prince Rupert near Lucy Island on Friday when the crew heard a distress call on the radio, said Kennicott Captain William Hopkins in Ketchikan Tuesday. The caller was disoriented and unable to specify his location, but did say he could see a big blue ship.

Searching the radar, the Kennicott crew found a Canadian charter salmon fishing vessel dead in the water.

"The odd thing was, as we pulled up alongside the boat there was nobody waving at us," Hopkins said.

"It was just deathly still."

Three of the people on board were unconscious and the fourth man was in danger of passing out from carbon monoxide poisoning, Hopkins said.

The source of the deadly gas was not clear, though Juneau Port Captain George Capachi said stoves are often to blame for carbon monoxide problems on small fishing boats.

The victims were revived with ventilation and bottled oxygen, though one of them was temporarily paralyzed, Hopkins said.

"The three people who were unconscious, they were well on their way, I think, to succumbing to carbon monoxide poisoning," Hopkins said.

When the Canadian Coast Guard showed up 15 minutes later the Kennicott continued her voyage north. The ferry was able to make up the hour spent on the rescue and arrived in Ketchikan on time, Hopkins assured Port Captain Capachi. Not that a delay would have mattered, Capachi said.

"Rendering assistance and saving four lives is not something to worry about being a little late on your schedule," Capachi said.

Hopkins said the rescue was the first time the Kennicott has had to use any of the rescue equipment, though the crew had done a practice drill earlier Friday.

KTN DAILY NEWS 6/17/99

Kennicott crew rescues vessel

Passengers of Canadian charter boat incapacitated by carbon monoxide

By LEILA KHEIRY
Daily News Staff Writer

Four people on the Canadian charter boat Sandsayre owe their lives to the crew members of the Alaska Marine Highway System ferry Kennicott.

The Kennicott was about an hour out of Prince Rupert, British Columbia, in Chatham Sound near Lucy Light Island, when the mate on watch heard a distress call over the radio, said George Capacci, AMHS port captain in Juneau. The skipper of the vessel in distress was talking to the Canadian Coast Guard and was obviously disoriented, said Capacci.

"At first they thought he sounded like he was drunk," he said.

The mate heard the Coast Guard ask the skipper if any other ships were in the area, said Capacci.

"He said, 'Yeah, I see a big blue boat,'" Capacci said.

The Kennicott crew guessed the vessel was close by, so they looked on the radar and found a vessel that wasn't moving. As soon as they turned the ferry toward that vessel, they heard confirmation of their hunch.

"The (skipper) said, 'That big blue boat turned right toward us,'" Capacci said.

The Kennicott has two fast rescue boats, he said, and one of them was dispatched with four crew members aboard. When the rescue boat pulled alongside the vessel, it was still and quiet, said Capacci.

"They quickly found out the four people on board were incapacitated and ... found out it was carbon monoxide poisoning," Capacci said. "So they brought the people out to the stern of the vessel ... warmed them up and gave them oxygen."

All AMHS crew members are trained in basic first aid, he said, and the pursers are trained in additional emergency services.

About 15 minutes after the Kennicott's crew started the rescue, the Canadian Coast Guard arrived and took over the rescue efforts, he said.

Donna Collins, formerly of Meyers Chuck, was a passenger on the Kennicott when the incident occurred. She said the Kennicott crew acted heroically.

"I was so moved by their willingness," Collins said. "They bravely went forward. Two women (of the four crew members) went aboard the ship without hesitation. I watched them drag these three large people out onto the ... deck and administer oxygen until the Canadian Coast Guard showed up. They definitely saved those people's lives."

Collins said the crew and the ferry system deserves appreciation.

"It's more than just a highway," she said. "It's a lifeline for those in trouble at sea. It's nice to know we have a backup to the Coast Guard running around."

Collins now lives in Washington state. She was traveling on the ferry to visit

See 'Rescue,' page 5

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— Donna Collins, a passenger on the Alaska Marine Highway System ferry Kennicott who witnessed crew members rescue four people from a Canadian charter boat.

Rescue

Continued from page 1

family in Ketchikan, she said.

The four people on the vessel have all recovered, said Capacci. After the Coast Guard arrived, they were transported to Vancouver, British Columbia, and received treatment for carbon monoxide poisoning. The treatment is similar to treatment for nitrogen poisoning, which divers can get if they ascend too quickly, Capacci said. They were placed in a pressure chamber and given oxygen.

"(They are) all recovering and doing well and no brain damage," he said. "The Coast Guard said ... they were as close to death from carbon monoxide poisoning as a human could be and still survive."

Capacci said he does not know where the carbon monoxide leak came from. It could have been the main engine, a generator or the cook stove, he said. He urges boat owners to make sure their boats are properly

ventilated and said a carbon monoxide detector would be a good idea. All AMHS ferries are equipped with carbon monoxide detectors, although it is not required by law, he said.

The system regularly responds to emergencies, said Capacci.

"It happens more frequently than we'd like to think," he said. "We get calls quite a bit to render assistance. ... We're on these waters all the time."

EDITORIAL

Heroic effort

The Kennicott's crew are today's heroes.

The crew of the newest vessel of the Alaska Marine Highway System rescued four boaters from certain death recently. The foursome was aboard a sailboat when they were overcome by carbon monoxide. One of them managed to put out a Mayday signal to the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Kennicott was in the vicinity. The ferry crew located the sailboat and then veered off course, sailing toward it. The crew dispatched one of its fast rescue boats, which came alongside of the sailboat. The crewmen pulled the sailboat passengers out of the cabin into the night air and began basic first aid until the Canadian Coast Guard arrived 15 minutes later.

The fast rescue boats are new equipment aboard the state's newest ferry. The ferry was put on line within the past year or so. It, as well as other state ferries, has proved to be a valuable service to mariners. This isn't the first time the ferries assisted mariners in distress or in need of some assistance.

The state made a good decision in updating the ferry system with a new ferry decked out in the latest equipment. The ferry's crew made the best use of it in the recent rescue, and deserves all of the appreciation it receives. While many would say it was in the line of duty and all one mariner would do for another, it was a heroic act.

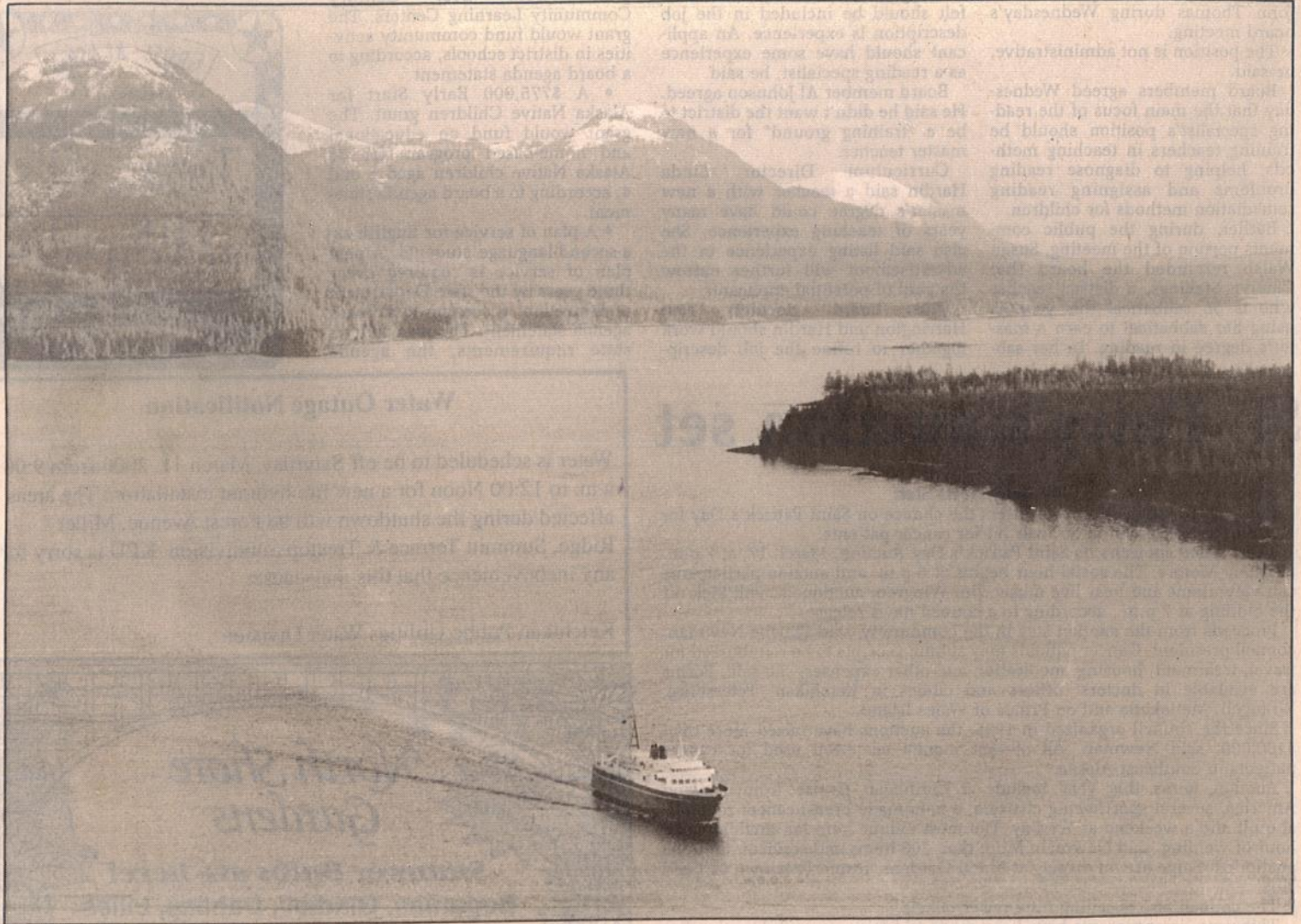
ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

- 50th ANNIVERSARY -

75 CENTS

FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2000

KETCHIKAN, ALASKA



Commuter cruise

With the scenic backdrop of snowcapped Annette Island in the background the Alaska Marine Highway ferry Aurora heads up Tongass Narrows between Pennock and Gravina Island Thursday afternoon.

Staff photo by Hall Anderson

ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

- 50th ANNIVERSARY -



May 9, 2001

Petty Officer Christopher Grisafe

Release # 066-01

Media Advisory

Coast Guard to present Public Service Commendation today

JUNEAU, Alaska – The Coast Guard will present a Public Service Commendation to an Alaska Marine Highway System steward at 3 p.m., today for her assistance in a ship pilot's rescue Nov. 28.

Capt. Roger Dunn fell from a ladder while transferring from the tug Ardie to the motor vessel Global Explorer in Southeast Alaska's Frederick Sound, tossing him 25-feet onto Ardie's deck where he sustained serious injuries.

Ardie's master contacted the Coast Guard and requested a medical airlift. Members aboard the motor vessel Kennicott overheard the incident on marine radio and offered their assistance.

Nancy Abbott, Chief Steward aboard the Kennicott, who is an Emergency Medical Technician and two additional Kennicott crewmembers, responded and provided first aid to Dunn. Abbott prepared Dunn for the airlift by a Coast Guard helicopter crew who transported him to Sitka's Mount Edgecumbe Hospital in critical condition. Dunn later transferred to Seattle's Harbor View Medical Center for further treatment.

"Captain Dunn is doing well and is on the way to recovery," said Lt. Cmdr. Joe Paitl, executive officer, Coast Guard Marine Safety Office Juneau. Abbott's efforts in rendering first aid to Dunn likely saved his life, according to Paitl.

Rear Adm. Tom Barrett, Commander, 17th Coast Guard District, will present the award to Abbott aboard the motor vessel Kennicott at Auke Bay.